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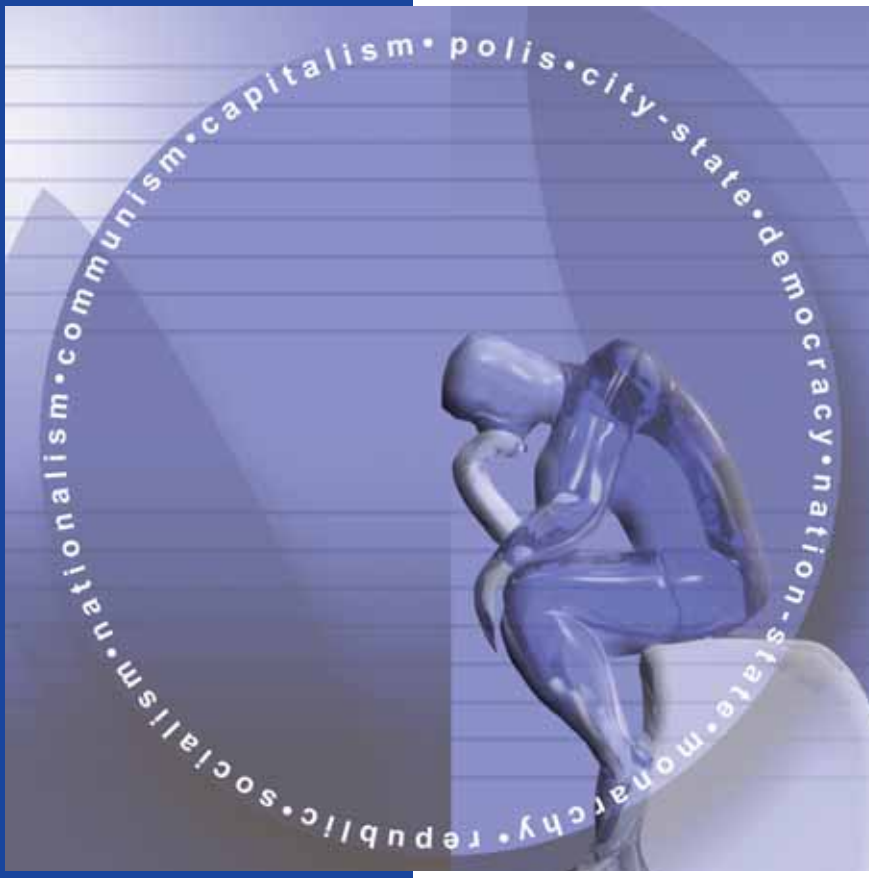
POLITICAL THEORY:

THE CLASSIC TEXTS AND THEIR CONTINUING RELEVANCE

COURSE GUIDE



Professor Joshua Kaplan

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Political Theory:

The Classic Texts and Their Continuing Relevance

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University of Notre Dame

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Professor Joshua Kaplan

Executive Producer
John J. Alexander

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Donna F. Carnahan

RECORDING

Producer - David Markowitz
Director - Matthew Cavnar

COURSE GUIDE

Editor - James Gallagher
Contributing Editor -
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Design - Edward White

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Course Syllabus

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Photo courtesy of Professor Joshua Kaplan

About Your Professor

Joshua Kaplan

Joshua Kaplan has taught at the University of Notre Dame since 1987. He graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz and earned a master's degree from the University of Chicago, schools renowned for two very different approaches to political theory. He teaches courses in political theory, constitutional law, and American politics and is the Political Science Department's associate director of undergraduate studies. He has been awarded Notre Dame's Kaneb Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Introduction

Political theory is like slow food in a fast-food world. We often crave simple answers when we feel overwhelmed by events we cannot understand and cannot control, but in the end, the answers do not satisfy or nourish us. Much of what we see in the media appeals to our prejudices and gives us the illusion that it is always easy to distinguish friend from enemy and help from harm, but we find it hard to talk about politics without resorting to clichés and stereotypes, and when we act—even when we vote—things don't always turn out the way we expect. Political theory doesn't give us easy answers, but it does make us think. It helps us to think about who we are, where we are coming from, and where we are going. At the same time, theory does not tell us what to do, but can help us to act with purpose and vision. It helps us to step back and get perspective on our problems and on who we really are.

This course introduces you to some of the great works of political theory. My goal is to make these works accessible to you without distorting or oversimplifying them. Political theory is an enjoyable, gratifying, and challenging subject that will reward the effort you put into thinking about it many times over. The course focuses on the classic books of political theory to help you to understand how political theory works. Understanding this dynamic element of political theory—the interaction between text and reader—will make a dramatic difference in your ability to understand what you read, and we will see how these traditional texts can help you to make sense of the world around us. We will also investigate how the language of political theory conveys its meaning. The course is not a substitute for reading the texts yourself, but it can help you to overcome some of the obstacles that these texts present. It is not easy to pick up a book by Aristotle or Hobbes and figure it out on your own. We all need some help in understanding the world, and that is the starting point for political theory itself. As you embark on this adventure, you are taking part in a community that comes from specific times and places, but transcends them. These great works of other times and places can speak to us today, wherever we are. Political theory does this better than many other subjects, in part because the theorist wants us to look around and think about the specifics of the world around us, but also to lift our heads and see farther than we normally do. The theorists we will study in this course wanted very badly to reach their readers, to make them think about their world differently. They don't tell us what to think, but we don't see things in quite the same way after we read them. In fact, we do not read these books so much as we experience them. These texts engage us and change us. As you learn about Plato, Thucydides, and Hobbes, you may see connections between their times and our own. You may see how their insights apply to life today. I hope they will become companions that can help you to understand and explain the world in ways that sound bites on the nightly news cannot.

Lecture 1:
How Political Theory Means

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are George Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language," in *A Collection of Essays,* and Sophocles' *Oedipus the King,* translated by Stephen Berg and Diskin Clay.

The first thing to understand about political theory is that it is not a collection of doctrines or assertions about politics, but rather a way of understanding the significance of political events. Political theorists have said things like, "It is better to suffer injustice than to commit injustice," or "All men are created equal," or "It is more important to appear to be virtuous than to actually be virtuous," but that does not mean that these things are true or that we have to simply accept or reject them. The purpose of such pronouncements is to give us a different way to think about who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. This is important, because one of the distinctive features of political theory is that we study the great thinkers of the past in a way that is different from many other academic disciplines. If a biologist reads Aristotle, it would be to discover what people used to think about biology. We do not study the political theory of Aristotle in order to learn what people used to think about politics, but rather to see what we can learn about politics today. When Aristotle wrote about poetry or theater, he said that poems and plays should have certain structures, but we do not take this as a guide for writing poetry or drama today. So when we read a particular pronouncement by a great

thinker, it is not so much to do what they tell us to do, but to see if there is something in his or her work that can help us to understand our world today. This is one of the things that makes political theory such an exciting and useful subject to study. But to do this, we have to learn how to get at the great books of political theory, because we have to read them in a slightly different way than we would read other books.

In the 1950s, John Ciardi wrote a book called *How a Poem Means*. It is a clever title because when we study poems in school, we generally want to know *what* the poem means, but Ciardi understood that the meaning of a poem is connected to the form and manner of its presentation. I think the same is true for political theory. Political theory is not so much about presenting doctrines as it is about understanding and explaining the significance of events, so our focus in this course as we study the great works of political theory will not only consider what they mean but *how* they mean, as well, and how they thought their theories could change the world.

Political theory is both a tradition of discourse—a canon of classic texts by the great political theorists—and a mode of discourse, a way of understanding and explaining the significance of political events, and so this course will both survey some of the great political theorists, such as Plato and Hobbes, and consider their relevance today and how they can help us to understand the significance of political events in our own time. This is an enjoyable and edifying subject to study. The political theorists we will be studying all believed that their works would change the world. They believed that people who read their works would think about politics differently and that if people thought about politics differently, the world would change.

Our word theory derives from ancient Greece, and it is revealing to look at its derivation. The word has two Greek roots. One is related to our word "theater" and the other is related to our word "theology." The Greek word *theatai* referred to the audience at performances at Greek festivals. These were not passive spectators. They compared, judged, and awarded a prize to the play they thought was best. Imagine the crowd at a Notre Dame football game. They are not out on the field, but they are not passive observers, either. They judge, they criticize, they compare. They are at the same time one step removed from the action and deeply invested in the game. They have a perspective that the players on the field do not. So political theory takes a step back and offers perspective that political actors do not have. The other Greek phrase related to our word theory is *theos hora,* which means to hear a god. Imagine a person sent to the Oracle at Delphi to ask a question. They would have to interpret what the oracle said and explain it to the city. Similarly, the task of the theorist is both to understand and explain in a way that people can understand.

I have two examples of how political theory means. The first is George Orwell's 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language." We know George Orwell as the author of *1984* and *Animal Farm,* novels that depicted the rise of totalitarianism. His essay, written after the end of World War II and at the beginning of the Cold War, looks at first like something written by a fussy English teacher complaining about bad grammar. At first, the meaning of the title, "Politics and the English Language," is not clear, because the essay

never identifies the connection between politics and the English language. It's only when we ask the essay this question that we can figure out how the essay answers it. One of my teachers in college used to say that a good writer will answer the questions that you bring to the text. The key is, you have to ask. Let's see how Orwell answers.

Notice how the essay begins: "Most people who think about it . . ." People see a problem, but believe they can't do anything about it. This is the main theme of the essay. People are confronted with major political problems, but feel powerless to do anything about them. If Orwell had to pick the number one political problem of his time, I think he would say powerlessness, because that makes all the other problems worse.

The other example of how political theory means can be seen in Sophocles' play *Oedipus Tyrannus.* We know this play as *Oedipus Rex* or *Oedipus the King.* The Greek word "tyrant" does not mean exactly what it means today. Instead of a dictator, a tyrant was a ruler who took power on his own, in contrast to a hereditary monarch. One of the ironies in the play is that Oedipus thinks he has come to power on his own ability, because of his intelligence and problem-solving ability. He alone was able to solve the riddle of the Sphinx and save the city of Thebes. However, we, as members of the audience, know that he is actually the heir to the throne in Thebes. We know it, but he doesn't. The audience was familiar with the story of Oedipus, and as we watch the play, we know more than the characters on stage. This kind of omniscience could make us smug—we know what's going to happen before the characters do. But if we think about it, we realize that this is a play in which the person who thinks he knows what is going on is actually completely wrong. In this play, knowledge turns out to be ignorance. The blind man, whom Oedipus criticizes as "Blind in your eyes. Blind in your ears. Blind in your mind," turns out to see the truth better than anyone. Teiresias responds to Oedipus, "You insulted me. You mocked me. You called me blind. Now hear me speak, Oedipus. You have eyes to see with, but you do not see yourself, you do not see." When Oedipus says, defensively, "Taunt me for the gift of my brilliant mind. That gift is what makes me great," Teiresias, whose first words in the play are "Wisdom is a curse when wisdom does nothing for the man who has it," replies to Oedipus, "That gift is your destiny. It made you everything you are and it has ruined you."

This was especially dramatic, because fifth-century Athens was a city that prided itself on its power, its vision. As we watch the drama, the play introduces in us an element of reflection, of questioning, that has special political significance in a place that prides itself on power. As we watch or read the play today, in the twenty-first century, we may catch glimpses of our own time and place. Sophocles' play is set in Thebes, but was performed in Athens for Athenians. It gave them just enough distance or detachment to give the audience some perspective, but at the same time was clearly intended to remind them of themselves. As we watch it today, it may remind us of our own time and place, of ourselves.

Political theory can come in different forms. It might be an essay, a play, a novel, a history book, or an autobiography; it doesn't have to be philosophy. Whatever form it comes in, political theory often tells us about things we

know, or think we know, but makes us reflect on them, and on ourselves, differently. It gives us a perspective on events and on ourselves, and reminds us of the limits of our understanding and our power—or at least reminds us that we have limits. It does this, though, not to make us weak and hesitant, but to inform our actions. As Pericles says in the great *Funeral Oration,* "We believe that what spoils action is not speeches, but going into action without first being instructed through speeches . . . ours is the bravery of people who think through what they will take in hand, and discuss it thoroughly; with other men, ignorance makes them brave and thinking makes them cowards." The political theorists we'll be studying all believed that they had something important to tell us. But they also knew that people don't always listen, so they had to find ways to convey their meaning in ways that would involve us and provoke reflection in us.

In this course, we will be looking at two questions that will serve as themes that allow us to compare the different theorists we'll be studying. The first question is the problem of preferences: How can people with different preferences agree on a common course of action? The second question is known as the problem of order: How can self-interested individuals be persuaded to cooperate rather than fight?

These are not the only problems of political theory, but they let us get at some of the most enduring political issues, and they will let us see how political theory can help us to think about politics. We want to believe that politics is not simply a matter of the strong forcing their preferences on the weak. But what else is there? And we would like to think that conflict is not inevitable, and that people might persuade themselves that it is in their interest to cooperate and do the right thing. But is there a realistic foundation for this hope? Let's see what the political theorists have to say.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How is political theory both a tradition and a mode of discourse?
2. How is *Oedipus Tyrannus* an example of "how" political theory means?

Suggested Reading

Orwell, George. "Politics and the English Language" in *A Collection of Essays*. New York: Hargrave, 1970.

Sophocles. *Oedipus the King*. Trans. Stephen Berg and Diskin Clay. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Other Books of Interest

Euben, J. Peter. *The Tragedy of Political Theory: The Road Not Taken*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Wolin, Sheldon. *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Lecture 2:
Plato 1

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Plato's *The Trial and Death of Socrates.*

A statue of Socrates

Plato was born into a wealthy Athenian family. As a young man, he expected to take a leadership role in the city, but he came under the sway of the philosopher, Socrates, and this changed his perspectives. The three dialogues we will be studying along with *The Republic* are direct and indirect responses to the trial and execution by the city of his teacher. But although the *Apology* and *Crito* are set at the scene of his trial and execution, and the *Apology* consists of the speech Socrates gave in his own defense, it is not entirely clear what they are telling us. We might have expected Plato to write an impassioned argument that Socrates was innocent and that the city was making a mistake by executing him. We know that is what he believed, but that is not the way he wrote it. Instead, we have these dialogues.

First of all, we already know the context of the dialogues. We know why Socrates is there and we know that the city ends up finding him guilty of impiety and corrupting the young, and we know the city sentences him to death by drinking hemlock. So it's a little like reading a book about a famous trial that took place in the past. But this book doesn't start out the way we might expect. If you or I were writing three stories about the trial and execution of our favorite teacher, we would probably argue that he was innocent, and portray his accusers as liars and scoundrels, in an effort to make the point that the whole thing was not fair and that a great injustice was done.

But Plato does something different. The moment to persuade the city has passed. If it were simply a matter of persuading them, surely no one could have done this better than Socrates himself. In effect, Plato is asking the city, What have you done? There's a *Calvin and Hobbes* cartoon in which Calvin is hammering nails into the living room floor and his mother screams, "Calvin,

what are you doing?" Calvin pauses for a moment, thinking that it is perfectly obvious what he's doing, and then says, "Is this a trick question?" What makes it funny is that she really isn't asking a question, she's asking him to think about what he's doing. When Adam and Eve have eaten the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, God asks Adam, "Where are you?" Adam is hiding, but it isn't that God doesn't know where he is. Rather, God's question is a way of asking Adam to think about what he is doing. In a similar way, Plato uses these dialogues to ask the city to reflect on what it has done to Socrates, on the wrong it has committed. True to the spirit of his teacher, Plato sets up the dialogues in a way that will teach the city the deeper significance of what it has done.

The first dialogue begins with a conversation that takes place outside, on the steps of the courthouse, between Socrates and a person we otherwise know nothing about and who played no obvious part in Socrates' trial. As we read the *Euthyphro,* it's not at all clear what the dialogue is about. Euthyphro seems like a know-it-all who turns out to know very little. But what does this have to do with Socrates? Socrates, after learning that Euthyphro is there to prosecute his father for murder, steers the conversation to the question, What is piety? We know that one of the two charges against Socrates was impiety, so we have a clue that the dialogue is defending Socrates by making a point about piety. We also know that the other charge against Socrates is that he corrupted the young. In *Euthyphro,* we have a man who has turned against his father, which seems like an understandable, but unnatural, state of affairs. In fifth-century Athens, murder was considered a religious crime.

Socrates points out two problems with the way Euthyphro tries to define piety. The first thing Euthyphro says is that piety is what he is doing now, prosecuting his father. Socrates replies that this is an example, not a definition. So Euthyphro tries again, and this time he defines piety as doing what is pleasing to the gods. Socrates raises two questions about this definition. The first thing he points out is that we are told that the gods often disagree and argue with one another, so that something that pleases one will displease another. Because something cannot be pious and impious at the same time, Socrates says, there's a problem with this way of thinking about piety. The other question he asks is whether the gods are pleased by something because it is pious or it pleases them because it is pious. This may not make sense at first, but think about it this way. Is piety just a matter of pleasing the group in power? So whatever they like, we call piety? Or is there something that is pious in its own right, which the gods like because it is what it is? In terms of Socrates' own situation, is piety whatever the majority in Athens say it is, or might the majority be wrong?

This dialogue asks us to ponder the consequences of the possibility that the city could be wrong. Is there an aspect of piety that is independent of the preferences of the majority in the city? Is there some way for Socrates to demonstrate that what he does is pious even if it displeases the majority of people? Even more importantly, is it possible for Socrates to benefit the city, even if the city condemns him for it?

This is what Socrates argues in the next two dialogues, the *Apology* and *Crito.* The Greek word *apologia* means defense, and you will notice that

Socrates does not actually apologize in the speech he gives at this trial, but instead defends himself by explaining who he is and why he does what he does. I've often thought it ironic that when Socrates asks others to define something like piety or justice, they usually begin by saying, It's what I'm doing now, and Socrates says, That's an example, not a definition. But here, Socrates himself seems to say, piety is what I'm doing now. He tells the story of his encounter with the Oracle of Delphi and how he responded to it. At first, he questioned people in order to confirm that he was not the wisest, but after he realized that people who thought they had wisdom really did not, he interpreted what the Oracle said to mean that it was his task to hold the city to account for not pursuing wisdom and for valuing the wrong things. He believed that he was on a mission from the gods, and that it would in fact be impious for him to stop. He believed that his questioning improved the city, and in fact that he improved the city more than anyone else.

This leads to another paradox in the dialogue. In the *Apology,* Socrates makes his famous pronouncement to the city: I will obey the gods rather than you. This is often seen as a foundation for civil disobedience. If it comes down to a conflict between my conscience, or my religious obligation, and obeying the law, I will obey my conscience rather than the law. But it's not quite as simple as this, because in the next dialogue, the *Crito,* Socrates compares the laws of Athens to his mother and father and says that he could not possibly disobey them, because to disobey them would be to destroy them and because he asserts it is never right to do harm. The answer is found by looking closer at the text and the context of the two statements. In the *Apology,* he says that if the city were to say to him that he would be acquitted if only he would stop questioning people and doing philosophy, then he would have to say that he would obey the god rather than the city. In the *Crito,* his friend Crito urges him to escape the city, but it is in this context that he says he cannot harm the city by leaving. In both situations, the thing he says he cannot and will not do is the same: he refuses to stop questioning people and leave the city. Why not? Because he believes that what he does benefits the city, and that he would harm the city if he were to stop.

As for the city's punishment, Socrates goes to great lengths to explain that the city is not really harming him. This is a crucial point for Socrates, because he wants to persuade people—even if only a few will agree with him—that what is good is also good for you. He does not portray himself as a martyr who is sacrificing himself for a greater good. We will pick up this theme in our second lecture on Plato.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What is Plato's intent in writing his dialogues?
2. What does Socrates argue in the *Apology* and *Crito?*

Suggested Reading

Plato. *The Trial and Death of Socrates*. Third edition. Trans. G.M.A Grube. Revised by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000.

Other Books of Interest

Euben, J. Peter. *Corrupting Youth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Reeve, C.D.C. *Socrates in the Apology: An Essay on Plato's Apology of Socrates*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1989.

Lecture 3:
Plato 2—*The Republic*

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Plato's *Republic.*

In our second lecture on Plato, we're going to look at the *Republic.* The title in Greek is *Politea.* It has the same root as the Greek word for the city—the *polis*—and politics. It might be translated as the regime. In this sense, it is like the Bible, which means the Book. Plato's *Republic* is the regime of regimes, like the Bible is the book of books.

Plato is an idealist, but not in the way he initially appears. He does not argue that people should sacrifice their self-interest for the sake of an ideal, because he does not believe that justice and virtue require us to sacrifice our self-interest. Socrates argues that what is good is also good for you. In book 2 of the *Republic,* Plato's brother Glaucon asks Socrates to convince him that justice does not require sacrificing self-interest. Glaucon tells the story of the ring of Gyges. Imagine someone had a ring that made him or her invisible. What incentive would that person have to be just and virtuous if he or she could do unjust things without getting caught? Is it only fear of punishment that makes us do the right thing? There are three kinds of good, he says: things that are good in themselves, things that are good because of what they bring, and things that are both good in themselves and good for what they bring. Socrates' task is to convince them that justice is the third kind of good. In the *Apology* and *Crito,* Socrates says you cannot harm a just person, and he insists that the punishment the city gives him, even the penalty of death, cannot harm him. It is important for him to insist that the city is not harming him, because he must convince the others that justice does not require sacrificing self-interest. This is important, because when he considers justice and how people can get along without harming one another, he has to convince them that it is never just to harm others. This is not an external moral precept so much as a matter of identifying with others.

Socrates has a series of conversations in book 1 of the *Republic* in which he asks people how they define justice. They all define justice in terms of themselves, in terms that reveal something about themselves. In effect, they say that justice is what they are doing now. Cephalus defines justice as paying your debts. He is an old man who has amassed wealth and is clearly worried about what will happen to him after death. He worries that he will be punished for how he has lived his life. He is worried about death, so in his old age he is paying his debts, but he is doing so literally, so he won't owe money when he dies, and perhaps in other ways as well. When we first see him, he has come from a sacrifice to the gods, and he desperately wants to believe that if he pays his debts, and if he atones for his sins, he will escape

punishment in the afterlife, so he spends his days preparing. His son, Polemarchus, modifies this definition by saying that justice is paying your debts in the sense of giving people what they deserve, which leads him to say that it is helping friends and harming enemies. This fits his view of the world and his character. The third character, Thrasymachus, defines justice two ways. First, he says that justice is just a euphemism for whatever is in the interest of the stronger—that might makes right. He modifies this when he then says that injustice is better than justice. Socrates wins them over through his questioning, and then at the beginning of book 2, Glaucon asks Socrates to prove that justice is something that is both good in itself and good for what it brings. Socrates, in other words, wants them to believe that justice does not require sacrificing your self-interest, that it is both good and good for you. Plato is often characterized as an idealist, as opposed to a realist, but he recognizes that a notion of justice as something that requires great personal sacrifice would not be effective in convincing people. He wants us to believe that justice does not require us to choose between what is in our interest and what is right, that what is right is always in our interest. That is why Socrates insists that he is not being a martyr when he accepts the city's punishment.

Throughout the *Republic,* Plato tells stories and parables to help us to see that justice is not something imposed on us from outside, but is inside us. For example, in the famous allegory of the cave, Socrates describes knowledge as turning toward the light. Socrates' method of questioning does not convince people through logical proofs. Rather, his questions help people to see the ways in which they are mistaken. He doesn't tell them they are wrong, but gets them to see the consequences of what they said. If it leads to conclusions they do not accept, there has to be a problem with their premise or definition. The truth is inside us, and our task is to recognize it in ourselves and in others. This is something we all have in common.

In the *Republic,* as in the three earlier dialogues, Socrates wants us to believe that justice is not only good, it is good for us. Polemarchus believes that justice requires us to help our friends and harm our enemies, but Socrates shows him—and us—that we do not always know who our friends and enemies are. In fact, we tend to make mistakes about this. We might inadvertently harm someone who turns out to be a friend. More than this, though, Socrates wants us to believe that justice never involves harming another, just as it never requires us to sacrifice our self-interest. It always benefits others, even as it benefits us.

The method Socrates uses is called the *elenchus.* Basically, Socrates takes an assertion that people make, shows them how it leads to conclusions that they recognize to be false, and so gets them to rethink their original definition. He does not tell them what to think, does not tell them they are wrong, does not offer a definition of his own, but rather asks questions that encourage others to reflect on what they thought they knew. In the *Allegory of the Cave,* Socrates portrays learning not as one person telling another what to think, but as turning toward the light. He believes that there is something in us that will recognize and respond to the truth if we are pointed in the right direction.

Plato insists that politics has to be more than the expression of our individual preferences. We tend to misunderstand what we want, and we do not always know who our friends are and what is in our interest. Self-interested individuals can cooperate if they move beyond a concept of justice as helping their friends and harming their enemies. When Socrates says that it is never right to do wrong, this is not simply a moral maxim, it is a way to help us to see that we are all part of something bigger than ourselves and that we should seek that which benefits everyone.

Later in the *Republic,* Socrates argues that, in the ideal city, men should hold all women and property in common. That way, they will treat all people younger than themselves as they would their own sons and daughters, because they might in fact be their own sons or daughters. And people would treat all those older than themselves as if they were their own parents, because they might be. This is a beautiful idea, that all men are brothers. But there is also a disturbing implication of this. Socrates says that this is the only way that we can get along. Is this true? Is it possible for us to get along only if we regard one another as family? There are two problems with this. The first is that it means it is impossible for us to get along with people we take to be different from ourselves. And second, this may be an impossible dream, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. If it is impossible for all of us to be family, does that mean that peace and justice are impossible? We will see that Aristotle disagrees with Socrates on this point.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How does Plato view the relationship among justice, virtue, and self-interest?
2. How does Plato's *Republic* illustrate that justice is inside us?

Suggested Reading

Plato. *Plato: Republic*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1992.

Other Books of Interest

Annas, Julia. *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Plato. *The Republic of Plato*. Ed. and trans. Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1991.

Lecture 4:
Thucydides 1

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is *Thucydides' On Justice, Power, and Human Nature: Selections from the History of the Peloponnesian War,* translated by Paul Woodruff.

Thucydides was an Athenian general who wrote a book about the war between Athens and Sparta when he was in exile from the city. Athenians in those days believed in personal responsibility, and the punishment for losing a battle was exile from the city for twenty years. Nowadays, we might expect someone in that position to write a book vindicating their actions, but instead, Thucydides has given us one of the most extraordinary books ever written. He himself hardly exists as a character in the book, and he gives the battle he lost only the briefest and most matter-of-fact of mentions, but in another sense, his history of the war between Athens and Sparta asserts his claim as the ultimate theorist, someone who can understand and explain what others do not see. He calls his book, "a monument for all time."

Thucydides presents difficult problems to the reader. His book does not present an attractive or accessible surface. It gets off to a very slow start, with a long and uninviting introduction that seems disconnected from the rest of the book. His account of the war between Athens and Sparta is full of obscure names and places that mean little to us today. More than that, there does not seem to be any theoretical content. It seems that he simply describes a series of events.

At the same time, Thucydides appears to be the most modern and accessible of theorists, because he sees things so clearly and describes them without illusion. He is usually characterized as a realist, someone who explains how things happen in terms of power rather than ideals or superstitions. There was a resurgence of interest in Thucydides in the 1950s, during the Cold War. His explanations in terms of power and the fear of power seem to fit right in with that dangerous world. Events have a way of teaching us, and our recent history allows us to read this book with new insight. All the elements of current events are here, along with all the questions. Was the war necessary? What were the real reasons for the war, as opposed to the reasons people gave at the time? The war with Iraq gives us another insight into this book. We now look back on the origins of the war differently than we did at the time. This is very similar to what Thucydides does with his readers, who know how the war has turned out as they hear about what was said and done and see why decisions were made. We also see the same sense of necessity, that we don't seem to have a choice.

This is a book about understanding and explaining. For Thucydides, the main political problem was that people do not understand what is driving events and seem powerless to change the course of events. People misjudge their power.

In this book, Pericles, the leader Thucydides admires the most, calls himself number one in understanding and explaining. His leadership was based on his ability to understand what was happening, his ability to understand what to do, and his ability to explain it to the city in a way that would help them to make good decisions. Thucydides was not a politician. He wrote this book in exile, but he creates a bond with the reader, and convinces us that theory can make a difference. We can learn from this war. We have all heard the quotation from George Santayana, that those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. But those who remember history also seem doomed to repeat it, too. People tend to make the same mistakes. But this most realistic and cold theorist extends to us the hope that we can learn. We need not be victims of events. As we read the speeches in this book, it is as if we are there. But like spectators at the theater, we know more than the characters do themselves. We can see their mistakes. We can understand why things are happening. We can understand how to interpret the speeches, the things people say. Seeing it at this remove, as we would watch a play, we have perspective that the participants do not. We're not the actors, but we can learn.

Pericles

Thucydides begins his history with several different versions of the origins of the war. The first one, known as the *Archaeology,* describes the origins and development of Athens, and this passage introduces, although somewhat cryptically, the themes that inform the rest of the book. In the early years, Greece was weak and sparsely populated. The people were nomads. Agriculture was impossible, because people did not know if they would still be around to harvest any of their crops. Life made it impossible to plan ahead. Thucydides describes them as masters of managing just enough to sustain them each day. They were vulnerable to attack by pirates. The areas that had the most fertile land were the must vulnerable to attack, but in his typical way, Thucydides explains that "the excellence of the land increased the power of certain men, and this made them vulnerable to the designs of outsiders." The areas with the greatest natural resources created wealth, which led to internal conflicts, which made the area more vulnerable to attacks from the outside. Athens, on the other hand, had rocky soil and fewer natural resources, so it was a less attractive target for invaders, which led paradoxically to a more stable population, which led to its strength. This is an entire theory of political development in one short passage. The things that make a city strong also make it vulnerable. The things

that make it weak will in time lead to strength. Every strength is a potential weakness, every weakness a potential strength. The strength of Athens was due, not to the fertility of the soil or the wealth of its resources, but to stability over time, which made it possible to plan ahead and achieve great things long-term. Thucydides identifies the core values and strength of Athens, but also gives us perspective on the origins of the war and the dynamics of Athenian power. Power creates the conditions of its own destruction, and the most serious threat is internal division—civil war, or stasis—rather than attack from the outside.

This gives us some perspective on what happens to Athens in the course of the war. When the story picks up again, Athens has become the preeminent power in the region. This was what we refer to now as the golden age of Greece. But if what he has told us in the *Archaeology* is true, power creates the conditions of its own destruction, then Athenian power also creates a potential weakness. Sure enough, Thucydides gives us another version of the cause of the war. This time it is an obscure event that was of little consequence in itself, but which reveals the cause. He describes a debate in Sparta between some Corinthians, who want to convince Sparta to support them in their war against Corcyra, and some Athenians, who happen to be there on business, but who feel compelled to speak when they hear the Corinthians flaming them. Thucydides explains that it is the growth of Athenian power, and the fear it engendered in other cities, that was the real cause of the war.

Thomas Hobbes loved Thucydides, and one of his comments is very perceptive. “The grounds and motives of every action he setteth down before the action itself, either narratively, or else contriveth them into the form of deliberative orations in the persons of such as from time to time bare sway in the commonwealth. After the actions, when there is just occasion, he giveth his judgment of them; shewing by what means the success came either to be furthered or hindered. Digressions for instruction’s cause, and other such open conveyances of precepts (which is the philosopher’s part), he never useth; as having so clearly set before men’s eyes the ways and events of good and evil counsels, that the narration itself doth secretly instruct the reader, and more effectually than can possibly be done by precept.”

What he means is that Thucydides normally makes his point indirectly. We have to look at the juxtaposition of events to discern his point. Far from simply describing events in a detached way, though, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* is highly dramatic. The clearest example of this comes early in the book, with a series of events. First we have the speech in which Pericles persuades the city to prepare for war and recommends a strategy for sustaining and winning the war. Next comes Pericles’ *Funeral Oration,* which has become one of the most famous speeches in history. But a little later comes Pericles’ last speech, which has a very different tone. The war is going badly and Pericles is on the defensive. What happened? And what does this change in tone mean? What happened is that a plague struck Athens, and what it means is that Athens is revealing its vulnerability.

In his early speeches, Pericles urges the city to plan ahead so that it can endure the bad times that will inevitably come. The power of Athens is the

power of its imagination, its ability to rise above its circumstances, to sustain an effort over time. This is the very thing that the plague attacks. The plague, Thucydides explains, defied explanation. This might more accurately be translated: the plague was bigger than *logos,* the Greek word for speech and reason. The plague defied reason in the sense that no one knew its cause or cure, but it also proved to be bigger than reason in the sense that it broke down people's resolve. Thucydides describes the effects of the plague on the body, but also on the spirit. People lost the ability to plan ahead and think about the consequences of their actions. They committed every sort of crime and bad act because they did not expect to live long enough to be punished. It is the revenge of the ring of Gyges. We are back in the *Archaeology,* when people thought only of how to survive one day. This is the most severe test for Athens. Sparta cannot defeat it, but Athens can defeat itself. Now, when people are disheartened and have lost perspective, they are the last ones to know. The book, though, allows us to take a step back and gain perspective.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why is it difficult to read Thucydides?
2. What did Thucydides identify as the real cause of the war?

Suggested Reading

Thucydides. *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature: Selections from the History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993.

Other Books of Interest

Connor, W. Robert. *Thucydides*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.

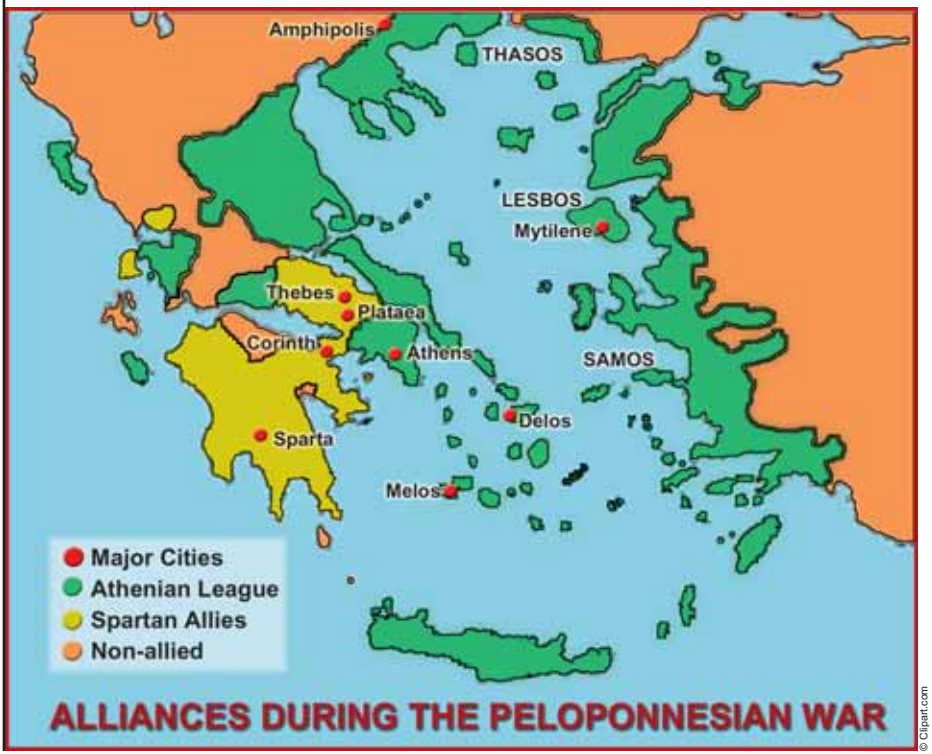
Strauss, Leo. *The City and Man*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Lecture 5:
Thucydides 2

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is *Thucydides' On Justice, Power, and Human Nature: Selections from the History of the Peloponnesian War,* translated by Paul Woodruff.

As we learn how to read Thucydides, we will discern recurring themes in the *History:* the power of *logos,* leadership, sticking to a plan, and the importance of language. This shows itself in several ways in his *History.* He shows the importance of persuasion in politics. Pericles describes himself as unsurpassed in understanding and explaining, and the book presents a series of debates in which people try to convince others to do something by various approaches, including appeals to reason, appeals to pride, or by resorting to deception and threats. The theme of *logos* as thinking ahead or perspective is also a major theme in the book.

In the war speech, Pericles remarks that "The empire is like a tyranny—although it may have been unjust to form, it is unsafe to walk away from."



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The key to understanding a given passage in Thucydides is to consider the scene. What is the speaker trying to persuade the city to do? How does he try to persuade them? When he makes this remark, Pericles is urging the city to prepare for war with Sparta, but more than that, he is urging them to resolve to stick by their decision, because he knows that the city will have ups and downs when things aren't going well. He is confident that the city can prevail in the end, if it can stick together and ride out the bad times. Later, Cleon, who after the death of Pericles becomes the most powerful leader in Athens, echoes this phrase, but with a perverse twist. Cleon tells the city that their empire is a tyranny, hated by others, and that Athens has enemies everywhere and must resort to force in order to instill fear in their allies as well as their enemies. When Cleon talks about sticking to a plan and not losing resolve, he is urging the city not to reconsider its brutal and inhumane plan to slaughter the people of Mytilene.

Thucydides resists our attempts to summarize. We want things to be simple, but he complicates things—or rather, he shows us that things are complicated. For example, we may be tempted to see Thucydides as a realist who explains things in terms of self-interest rather than justice. But two things make this more complicated than that. For one thing, throughout this book, Thucydides shows that people often misjudge what is in their self-interest. Over and over again, the Athenians make errors in judgement about what will help them. It should remind us of the conversation between Socrates and Polemarchus in book 1 of Plato's *Republic.* Polemarchus wants to define justice as helping friends and harming enemies, but Socrates explains that not only do we tend to make errors, and that people we thought were friends turn out to be enemies, and vice versa, we also make errors in knowing what will help someone and what will turn out to harm them. For another, Thucydides shows how people twist the meanings of words and use the word "justice" to justify doing something horrible.

Early in the book, the Corinthians are trying to persuade the Spartans to ally with them and prepare for war with Athens. They realize that the Spartans will not be persuaded by appeals to virtue, to the Corinthians' appeal to their self-interest. We might be tempted to conclude that the book is saying something about virtue and self-interest, but the book goes on to confound us. In the Mytilenean debate later in the book, Athens has decided to punish a city that has proved disloyal by killing all the men and selling all the women and children into slavery. But a short time later, they reconsider. By this time, Pericles has died, and the leader of the city is a man named Cleon, whom Thucydides describes as the most violent man in Athens. Cleon seems like the antithesis of Pericles, and in some ways he is, but there are disquieting things that make us wonder if he is a degraded version of Pericles, or the Periclean ideal played out to its logical conclusion. In urging the city not to reverse its decree of death to the Mytileneans, Cleon's speech is a disturbing echo of Pericles' advice to stick to the plan. Here, the plan is brutal and harsh—or "big" and "raw" are the words Thucydides uses. Cleon also echoes the phrase Pericles used, when he says, "You don't realize that your empire is a tyranny." Pericles meant that power comes with certain imperatives. If the empire is like a tyranny, it is Athens who is its subject. Athens had no choice. It could not walk away from the imperatives of empire, but instead had to

serve it. Cleon means that the empire has become the bad guy. Athens was forced to brutalize its neighbors, to keep them in fear. It had to punish every act of disloyalty, because otherwise its enemies would be emboldened. The other speaker, Diodotus, has to argue that it is not in the Athenian interest to punish the rebellious city. To do so, he says, some punishment worse than death will have to be found. Cleon urges the city to do something brutal, but he bases his argument on justice. Diodotus urges the city to do something that is more humane, but he fears that he will not be persuasive if he argues in moral terms, so he frames his argument entirely in terms of self-interest rather than justice. It is in the Athenian interest not to kill the Mytileneans, he argues.

The central event of the book is one that had little significance in terms of its effect on the outcome of the war, but great significance in terms of the meaning of the war. This is the civil war in Corcyra. Thucydides describes it in terms similar to the ones he uses to describe the plague in Athens. It affected people's morals, their ability to see the consequences of their actions. "War is a violent teacher," he tells us, because it reduces people to the level of their circumstances. Athenian greatness was based on its ability to rise above the level of its circumstances, but we see what happens when that disappears. The violence of the civil war also caused people to reverse the usual way of using words to describe things. Prudent hesitation was considered cowardice. Someone who started a quarrel was trusted, but someone who opposes him was not. Ultimately, Thucydides tells us, this also had the effect of desensitizing the Greeks to violence, as civil wars spread to other cities, and the violence escalated as cities outdid one another. This is a book about language, about understanding and explaining, and Thucydides reminds us that the violence of the moment can rob us of our ability to understand and explain. The *History* helps its readers sift through the uncertainty of their own times by helping us to appreciate the struggles between violence and *logos* as they affect the way we understand what is happening to us.

As we read the *History,* we may be reminded of the position of the United States after World War II, when the United States became a world power—or perhaps the United States today, when we must fight off all threats great and small. This book, written long ago about a war that now seems pointless, still has the power to help us reflect. There's no simple moral. It is neither pro-war nor anti-war. Even in the end, after Athens has engaged in a misguided and very costly attack on the distant island of Sicily, Thucydides still thinks that Athens could have won the war if it had not become divided internally. Any reader of the book, now or at the time, would read it knowing that the war would end up badly for Athens. We see the Athenians making mistake after mistake. We can see it in hindsight, but the book shows us how people convince themselves and make bad decisions. In reading about the bad decisions the Athenians make, we can perhaps learn from their mistakes. Political theory has the power to give us perspective in ways that other forms of thought might not.

We see how far Athens has gone over the edge in another event that had little significance on the conduct or outcome of the war, but which Thucydides uses to show how Athens became trapped. This is the famous dialogue

between the Athenians and the island of Melos. Athens gave Melos a choice: surrender or be defeated, in which case all the men would be killed and all the women and children would be sold into slavery. To the Athenians, this is a reasonable choice and they urge the Melians to do the smart thing and submit. There is no dishonor, they tell them, to surrender to a stronger power; it is only rational. But the Melians refuse to submit. Against all odds, they desperately cling to hope. The gods are on their side, they tell the Athenians, because the gods protect the innocent. The Athenians counter that the gods protect the strong; the fact that Athens is strong is proof that the gods are rewarding them. The Athenians cannot understand why the Melians refuse to surrender, but Thucydides shows us that Athenian power has generated the conditions of its own destruction. Far from intimidating their enemies, Athens has somehow emboldened them. The fear of Athenian power is so great that even the weakest islands believe they have no choice but to fight. The feisty—but perhaps foolish—Melians ought to remind Athens of when the city defeated the Persians against all odds. This was the battle that established Athens as the preeminent power in Greece, but Athens cannot discern between real enemies and imaginary ones. This looks like a degradation of the Periclean ideal, but it was Pericles who urged the city not to accept any injustice, no matter how small, from any city weaker than itself.

Thucydides described his *History* as a possession for all time. He doesn't tell us what to do or what to think, but after we read the book, we look at things a little differently. He makes the events of the war between Athens and Sparta part of our own experience, because we can recognize ourselves in these people from long ago and can relate to the battle between *logos* and the violence that threatens to overtake it. He reminds us that, like political theory, politics itself is about understanding and explaining.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What are the major themes of Thucydides' *History?*
2. How is war a "violent teacher"?

Suggested Reading

Thucydides. *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature: Selections from the History of the Peloponnesian War*. Trans. Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993.

Other Books of Interest

Debnar, Paula. *Speaking the Same Language: Speech and Audience in Thucydides' Spartan Debates*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

Price, Jonathan J. *Thucydides and Internal War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Lecture 6:
Aristotle

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Aristotle's *The Politics,* translated by Carnes Lord.

Aristotle was Plato's student at the Academy, the school that Plato founded. There is a painting called *The School of Athens* that is famous because of the way it depicts the contrast between Plato and Aristotle. Plato is pointing upwards, representing his belief in abstract forms, while Aristotle is pointing to the ground, symbolic of his concern with the here and now, describing things as they actually are. Like most such contrasts, the concepts of idealism and realism are useful, but too simple. Aristotle was certainly concerned with the things of this world. He wrote on a wide variety of subjects, from astronomy and botany to poetry, physics, and theater. But far from simply describing reality, he shows us how the things we see can lead us to things that are true, but not immediately apparent.

Aristotle used a concept called the *telos,* or end, or purpose. When defining something, you had to look past the thing you saw before you to discern its end. For example, the *telos* of an acorn is an oak tree. If you want to know what an acorn is, you can't really understand the acorn just by looking at it. You need the imagination to see its potential, to see what it is meant to be. In the *Politics,* Aristotle takes the things we see around us and helps us to see their *telos.* In doing so, he offers a way for us to understand how by being part of something larger than ourselves, we can reach our true ends. He applies the same concept to the study of politics, both by identifying the *telos* of politics and by explaining things about politics that are true, but which may not be immediately apparent to us. In this way, he shows us that politics is about real people with real interests, but that from the standpoint of any particular person or interest, politics is not simply about them getting their way. His study of politics helps us to see that politics is about our connections with others.

The *Politics* begins by distinguishing three types of association or partnership: the partnership between a man and a woman, the household, and the political association. Each has its purpose, but if we just looked at them in isolation, we might misunderstand them. Today, we sometimes hear political candidates say that they are qualified to run for office because they have good business skills, and running the country is like running a business, but Aristotle tells us there is a difference. Only the political partnership allows us to be all we can be.

Now, what does he mean by this? When we look at the world of politics, it doesn't seem so satisfying, and we might have reason to conclude that we can find fulfillment in business or family much more than we could ever do in politics. And in a way, we would be right. Aristotle devotes much of the

Politics to the question of whether the virtue of the citizen is the same as the virtue of a good person, because we might well wonder.

But Aristotle has something different in mind. First, he says that the unit of society is not the individual, but the partnership. Only as part of something larger than ourselves can we be ourselves. Aristotle makes the point that we cannot even survive unless we are part of a partnership with others, and we certainly cannot create anything of lasting value, anything that will outlive us, with a partnership with others. When he says that the political partnership is the partnership for the highest purpose, the partnership that allows us not only to survive but to live well, he means that only the political partnership comprehends us all, both in the sense that it includes us all and that it understands us all. There is a difference, he says, between a large household and a small city. It's not the number of people, but rather the purpose, or *telos,* of the partnership. The purpose of the political partnership is living well. We have all heard the passage from Aristotle's politics that is usually translated, "Man is a political animal." We might more accurately translate it, "Human beings are by nature fit for the *polis*." What does he mean by this? Well, in that passage, Aristotle says that the city is not a herd, like a swarm of bees; it's not simply a collection of people, but rather a particular kind of partnership that brings out the best in people.

Aristotle says something curious, that the *polis* is by its nature prior to the household and prior to each of us. What can he possibly mean by this? Surely he is not talking about totalitarianism. Aristotle uses the terms "natural" and "by nature" in different ways, so it is not always clear what the terms mean, but consider this. When we are born, we are born into a particular time and place, not of our own choosing, into a world we did not create. That world exists before we do. Later in this course, we will study social contract theory, which appears to start with the individual, but even Hobbes and Locke recognize that the state precedes us. Aristotle is teaching us that if we only look at the world around us in terms of ourselves, we are likely to misunderstand everything, including the *telos* of politics. Politics is not really about each of us getting what we want at a given moment, but rather each of us being part of something larger than ourselves that allows us to transcend the interests that we think may define us. In this, he may be closer to Socrates than he thinks.

Aristotle criticizes what Socrates said about how, in the ideal *polis,* women and property would be held in common. Aristotle points out several problems with this idea, but the main problem is that that is not the way to bring people together. It is not true that only by giving people the same interests can they be at peace with one another. The point is to bring together people who are not related to one another, people who do different things, who are different from one another. It is not true that only if we are all brothers can we be at peace, according to Aristotle. The political partnership doesn't assume all people are alike, but unites them all. Imagine a football team. The players on the team are not really interchangeable. Ideally, not everyone on the team is alike: some are bigger, some are faster, and some are stronger. Not everyone has to have the same qualities for the team to be successful. But it is only when the players come together that their qualities can be used to best advantage.

So it is with the political partnership. Some citizens are wealthy, some are poor, and some come from aristocratic families, while others do not. Aristotle tells us that politics is not about everyone having the same interests, but that only the political association is comprehensive enough to transcend citizens' interests so that they are all part of something that allows them to live well.

Aristotle tells us that within the city some may think that wealth or family entitles them to have power, but that such qualities are no more relevant than height or beauty. The best city is governed by a combination of interests, where the wealthy have to think about the interests of the poor and the poor have to think about the interests of the wealthy. It is in the interaction of people who are in some way unequal that people become truly human.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How does the painting *The School of Athens* illustrate the differences in the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato?
2. What did Aristotle mean when he said that the *polis* is by its nature prior to the household and prior to each of us?

Suggested Reading

Aristotle. *The Politics*. Trans. Carnes Lord. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Other Books of Interest

Aristotle. *Aristotle on Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse*. Trans. George A. Kennedy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

McKeon, Richard. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Intro. C.D.C. Reeve. New York: Modern Library, 2001.

Lecture 7:
Machiavelli

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Machiavelli's *The Prince,* translated by Angelo M. Codevilla.

Virtually everything about Machiavelli is controversial, not only because he says outrageous things, but also because scholars disagree about every aspect of his work. Some believe he is evil, while others stress his republican values. Some see him as a cold, clear-sighted realist. Others consider the book a satire, full of bad advice intended to sabotage the prince.

Machiavelli is usually seen as one of the first modern thinkers, the gateway between ancient political thought and modern political thought. He seems as different as it is possible to be from Aristotle, who characterizes the political partnership as natural, while Machiavelli describes politics as a world without rules, peopled by violent, self-interested individuals. And yet, Machiavelli is the person who said, "I love my city more than my own soul." To argue that he is a counselor of evil overlooks the fact that the princes he describes and addresses certainly did not need any encouragement from him to be evil and violent. He lived in a very violent period of history. It is not as though Machiavelli believed Lorenzo was being too nice and needed to be encouraged to be less moral. The leaders of this time tortured and killed their enemies, poisoned their relatives, and were ruthlessly ambitious—all without any prompting from Machiavelli.

Machiavelli is also often characterized as ruthlessly realistic, as someone who describes what people actually do rather than what they ought to do. At a time when politics was changing, when people doubted the natural or moral foundations of their politics, Machiavelli saw it was pointless to appeal to concepts of justice and morality that had little power. But the alternative was not a cynical realism.

To Machiavelli, religion was no longer capable of guiding action. He argued that morality often leads to very bad results. The government was just as bad. Even self-interest was not enough. Fortune rules half our lives. Other equally ambitious people may prevent us from accomplishing our goals. More importantly, self-interest is an insufficient basis for politics because we cannot accomplish anything on our own. Action requires politics. The prince doesn't do anything by himself. It takes big movements to do big things. In his letters, Machiavelli describes his own life outside of politics. It sounds pathetic. He feels helpless in his isolation and wants to be in on the action. The prince is constrained by the people, but he needs them if he is to accomplish anything, and if he is to retain power.

Like Aristotle, Machiavelli has a dynamic concept of politics. Politics is not about agreement. He tells us that the best thing about the Roman political

system was the way the different factions fought with one another. But the thing that provided the arena that kept factional conflict safe and healthy and positive was not the actual government, but a civic idea, a concept of a founding purpose that animated and united all factions—like a mission statement, but not specific. This is very much like the way we talk about the Constitution. It was the idea of dedicating the country to freedom and equality, rather than any specific doctrine, that has united the country.

But Machiavelli's point is not that it is possible to know everything, and his purpose is not to give foolproof advice. In fact, all he gives us are examples of people who have not been able to succeed consistently. It might be more useful to think of his goal, not as telling us how to adapt, but as showing us that adaptation is necessary and that change is the normal condition. Politics is not about fixed relations and policies. It has a dynamic element. There is no real solution to the problem of order. Politics is a process, not a fixed set of institutions or practices. There is no foolproof guide; there are no set principles that will always prove effective. It is not that religion is bad or that virtue is bad, but rather that they cannot be relied upon because they do not always lead to effective solutions. We can't just say, I'll do the right thing and expect everything will be okay. We may do the right thing, but things may not turn out the way we want.

Machiavelli tries to appeal to the prince not through appeals to a religious or moral obligation, and not simply in terms of the prince's self-interest. Machiavelli appeals to the prince's manliness and to his sense of *virtu.* This Italian word is related to our word "virtue," but is closer to the Greek word *arete,* which might be translated as the excellence of a particular thing. For example, someone might be good at something without actually being a good person. Machiavelli also appeals to the prince's sense of history. He exhorts the prince to do great things. What is the difference between appealing to internal norms, which Machiavelli regards as insufficient, and appealing to the prince's sense of *virtu*?

In the end, Machiavelli reminds us by his example and by his words that even when we try to see things without illusions, we will never be free of the need to believe in something outside ourselves.

Francis Bacon said that "we are much beholden to Machiavelli and others, that write what men do, and not what they ought to do." The historian R.R. Palmer wrote, "Medieval writings on politics, those of Thomas Aquinas, for example, had always talked of God's will for the government of men, with such accompanying matters as justice and right, or divine and natural law. All this Machiavelli put aside. He 'emancipated' politics from theology and moral philosophy. He undertook to describe simply what rulers actually did, and thus anticipated what was later called the scientific spirit, in which questions of good and bad are ignored, and the observer attempts to discover only what really happens. What really happens, said Machiavelli, is that effective rulers and governments act only in their own political interest, they keep faith or break it, observe treaties or repudiate them, are merciful or ruthless, forthright or sly, peaceable or aggressive, according as they estimate their own political needs. Machiavelli was prepared to admit that such behavior was bad; he only insisted that it was in this way, however regrettably, that suc-

cessful rulers behaved. He was thought unduly cynical even in an age not characterized by political delicacy. He had nonetheless diagnosed the new era with considerable insight. It was an age when politics was in fact becoming more secular, breaking off from religion, with the building up of states and of state authority emerging as a goal requiring no other justification."

As a young and ambitious Florentine, Machiavelli was sent to represent the city in negotiations with France. He saw the contempt that France had for his city; he realized the limitations of conventional ideas about politics. At this time, the standard training for diplomats was an education in the classic Greek and Roman authors, such as Livy and Tacitus.

Political scientists say that there are only three possible responses to the problem of order: internalized norms such as morality or religion, external authority, or self-interest itself. Machiavelli would seem to reject the first category altogether. Morality and religion are simply incapable of uniting people. Machiavelli seems to appeal to the third category: it's all about self-interest. You do whatever you can get away with. The second category, external authority, is not really helpful. Why? Because you can't count on other people. The state has its own motives and needs to be controlled as much as any individual. But today I want to argue that this is not really an accurate assessment of Machiavelli. The lesson of Machiavelli is that even when we try to see the world without illusions, we still have not eliminated the need for illusions. For Machiavelli, the illusion we need is "the Founding," a Roman idea. The idea of the Founding provides the necessary authority for collective action.

The thing that makes this interesting is that Machiavelli sees this as trying to recover something from the past. Only that is capable of providing the unity of purpose. Why? To Machiavelli, religion was no longer capable of guiding action. He argued that morality often leads to very bad results. The state? Just as bad. Why isn't self-interest enough, then? Machiavelli gives three answers. The first reason is *fortuna,* fortune, or luck. We simply don't have control of our destinies. Fortune rules half our lives. The second reason that self-interest is not enough is resistance from others. Other people are ambitious, too, and bad. Left to themselves, people will do very bad things and may prevent us from accomplishing our goals. The third reason why self-interest is an insufficient basis for politics is that we cannot accomplish anything on our own. Action requires politics. The prince doesn't do anything by himself. It takes big movements to do big things. In his letters, Machiavelli describes his own life outside of politics. It sounds pathetic. He feels helpless. He wants to be in on the action. The *Discourses* is about the resources available for people to rule, in a republic. *The Prince* is about a ruler working with the people. He is constrained by them, but he needs them if he is to accomplish anything, and if he is to retain power.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why is Machiavelli often characterized as ruthlessly realistic?
2. How does Machiavelli try to appeal to the prince's sense of *virtu?*

Suggested Reading

Machiavelli. *The Prince*. Trans. Angelo M. Codevilla. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997.

Other Books of Interest

Gilbert, Felix. *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984.

Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. *Fortune Is a Woman*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987.

Lecture 8:
Thomas Hobbes—*Leviathan*

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan.*

Thomas Hobbes is one of the greatest political theorists in part because of the importance of his argument, and in part because of the way he presents it. Hobbes argues that we cannot avoid conflict with one another because we cannot afford to trust one another without an external authority. We may not like his argument. We may disagree, but we cannot disregard it. Few political theorists have Hobbes' clarity of thought and presentation, and yet, there is still more here than meets the eye. In this lecture, we are going to look at his argument and also its purpose. Why would he want us to think this, and how does he try to convince us?

Hobbes loved Thucydides, and one of the best ways to understand Hobbes is to think about why he was so attracted to him. Hobbes draws on Thucydides in two related ways. Hobbes admired the method of Thucydides, and Hobbes' famous description of the state of war was directly inspired by Thucydides' description of the early days of Greece in the *Archaeology,* the plague in Athens, and the civil war in Corcyra. These two influences are connected, because the description of the state of war, like the descriptions of the plague and civil war, are meant to get our attention and induce us to reflect on the breakdown of *logos,* or reason. Although Hobbes presents a startlingly clear argument, his larger point is to be found in a narrative approach that is not so linear.

Consider this passage, in which Hobbes describes the narrative technique of Thucydides. "The grounds and motives of every action he setteth down before the action itself, either narratively, or else contriveth them into the form of deliberative orations in the persons of such as from time to time bare sway in the commonwealth. After the actions, when there is just occasion, he giveth his judgment of them; shewing by what means the success came either to be furthered or hindered. Digressions for instruction's cause, and other such open conveyances of precepts (which is the philosopher's part), he never useth; as having so clearly set before men's eyes the ways and events of good and evil counsels, that the narration itself doth secretly instruct the reader, and more effectually than can possibly be done by precept."

Hobbes points out two things in this passage. First, the "grounds and motives of every action" are the proper subject of political theory. Hobbes agrees with Thucydides that the theorist needs to understand and explain the real reasons people do things, as opposed to what they tell themselves. Second, "precepts . . . he never useth." The theorist instructs without resorting to exhortations or precepts. The theorist is trying to convince the reader

not simply by logic but by reflection, allowing readers to figure things out for themselves.

Ironically, many modern readers find Hobbes difficult to follow, partly because of the archaic style and spelling, and partly because the "scientific" way he proceeds from point to point just seems silly today, despite—or because of—the pretense that it is scientific. One of his early biographers tells a story that can help us to make sense of why he proceeds in this way. Hobbes was working as a tutor in the home of a wealthy person, and one day, he saw a copy of Euclid's *Elements* opened for its decorative value. As Aubrey tells it, "Being in a gentleman's library, Euclid's *Elements* lay open, and 'twas the 47th prop. of Book I. He read the proposition. 'By G-d,' said he (he would now and then swear, by way of emphasis), 'this is impossible!' So he reads the demonstration of it, which referred him back to such a proposition; which proposition he read. That referred him back to another, which he also read. And so on, until at last he was demonstratively convinced of that truth. This made him in love with geometry."

Hobbes looked at the conclusion of one of Euclid's proofs and could not believe it. He then looked at the previous step, and the one before that, and the one before that. By the time he had worked back to the beginning, he was convinced of something that seemed counterintuitive at first. The interesting thing about this is that Hobbes worked backward. He did not start at the beginning and work through the steps of the proof, but started with a conclusion that seemed counterintuitive and then discovered why it must be so.

In an interesting way, this is what he does with politics. He starts with what we have now, an arrangement of power that seems controversial, and sets out to show why it must be so. The *Leviathan* starts at the beginning and works up from elementary particles, as it were, to the interactions of power between people. But the impulse that animates the *Leviathan* is the question of why the authority of the state must be obeyed.

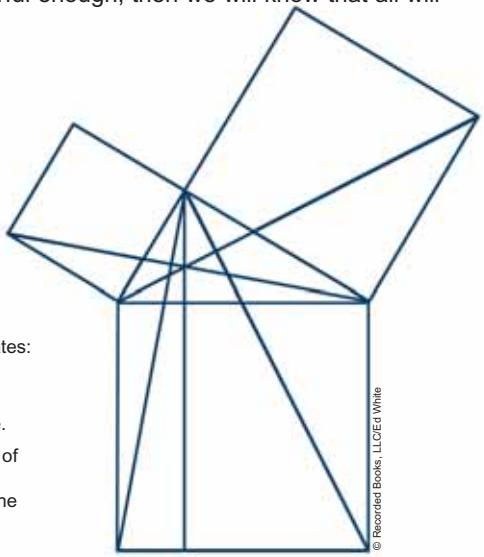
The second interesting thing about this story is that it helps us to see that the *Leviathan* is meant to induce in us a kind of reflection. Although Hobbes appears to start at the beginning and proceed step by step, the state of nature that he describes is not something that ever existed. The social contract that gets us out of a state of war is not a historical event that took place at some point in the past. Rather, the social contract is a convention, an analytical device, a kind of reflection. Why are things the way they are? Imagine, Hobbes tells us, if there were no state. Imagine the inevitable conflicts. Our passions—combined with competition and distrust—inevitably lead to what he describes as a state of war in one of the most memorable passages in all of political theory. See if you notice the similarities to Thucydides' descriptions of the early days of Greece: "In such a condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently, no culture of the earth, no navigation, nor building, no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force, no knowledge of the face of the earth, no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

This is not actual history, but a concept, an act of imagination. Hobbes tells

us not what to think, but how to think about power. If we think about things this way, we will, on our own, come to certain conclusions. All we need to do is reflect, he suggests, and we will see the truth in what he tells us. If anyone doubts this tendency to descend into conflict or believes that Hobbes has too pessimistic a view of human nature, Hobbes invites them to reflect on their own actions and the fears they arise from. "Let him therefore consider with himself—when taking a journey, he arms himself, and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; even when in his house, he locks his chests; and this when he knows that there be laws, and public officers, armed, to revenge all the injuries that shall be done him—what opinion has he of his fellow subjects, when he rides armed; of his fellow citizens, when he locks his doors; and of his children and servants when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse man's nature by his actions, as I do by my words?"

As we go through the steps of Hobbes' argument, keep in mind their purpose. Why do we need an external authority? Why can't we rely on the golden rule? Hobbes says that we will not do the right thing, because we cannot trust others to do the right thing. Only if we know that an external authority will punish transgressors will we feel it is safe to cooperate.

Hobbes begins with a problem. How is it possible for people to want something that is ultimately not in their self-interest? The natural tendencies of people lead to conflict and war rather than cooperation and peace. People always want to protect what they have. They want more, and they compete for the same things. Hobbes asserts that we are all motivated by our own preservation. He says we have a right to do whatever it takes to preserve ourselves, and we have an obligation to do whatever it takes to preserve ourselves. But this leads to fighting and insecurity. The golden rule is not enough to prevent conflict, because even if we want to do the right thing and avoid conflict, we cannot trust others to do the same. If an external authority, which Hobbes calls the sovereign, is powerful enough, then we will know that all will



Book I, Proposition 47 of Euclid's *Elements* states:

In right-angled triangles the square on the side opposite the right angle equals the sum of the squares on the sides containing the right angle.

The diagram often included with Euclid's proof of the Pythagorean Theorem is called the "Franciscan's cowl" or the "bride's chair." It is the diagram pictured here.

have to obey. Hobbes convinces us that our natural inclination leads to conflict. Why isn't this realization enough? Why do we have to have a real sovereign with real power? Because even if we realize that it is not in our self-interest to fight, we may feel we have no choice if others threaten our self-preservation. We need a real sovereign with real power. As Hobbes says, "Covenants without the sword are but words."

You may have asked yourself why people stop at stoplights. Is it virtue? Is it self-interest? Is it fear of punishment? What if we're on a deserted road? Hobbes would say that it's not simply a particular stoplight that we are obeying. We stop on principle. We obey the idea of the law. There may in fact not be a reason to obey that particular law, to stop at that particular light. But we do, anyway. We like to think of virtue, self-interest, and fear of punishment as separate motivations, but Hobbes shows us how these are all mixed together. It is in our self-interest to create and obey an external authority that motivates us to obey even if we may not want to. In other words, freedom does not mean doing whatever we want. It may seem illogical, but remember Hobbes' encounter with Euclid's *Elements.* It seems impossible, but if we work back we can see the foundation and see that it must be true.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why is Thomas Hobbes considered one of the greatest political theorists?
2. What attracted Hobbes to Thucydides?

Suggested Reading

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Ed. C.B. MacPherson. New York: Penguin, 1982.

Other Books of Interest

Hobbes, Thomas. *Hobbes: On the Citizen*. Eds. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Lloyd, Sharon A. *Ideals as Interests in Hobbes's Leviathan: The Power of Mind Over Matter*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Lecture 9:
Jean-Jacques Rousseau—*On the Social Contract*

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *On the Social Contract.*

Hobbes presents a powerful case for why we need an external authority, but he does not help us evaluate when that authority is legitimate. This is exactly where Jean-Jacques Rousseau can help us. In his book *On the Social Contract,* Rousseau tells us what legitimate authority would have to look like, what authority would have to mean in order for it to be legitimate. Rousseau is one of the most controversial of political theorists and has been interpreted in a wide variety of ways. But everyone agrees that there are two sides to Rousseau; he sometimes emphasizes the freedom of the individual, but at other times emphasizes the importance of the collective. Rousseau's writings are full of paradoxes, and he liked to believe that his own paradoxes reflected something of larger significance. We all share this paradox; we value individual freedom, but at the same time, we like to think of ourselves as part of something larger.

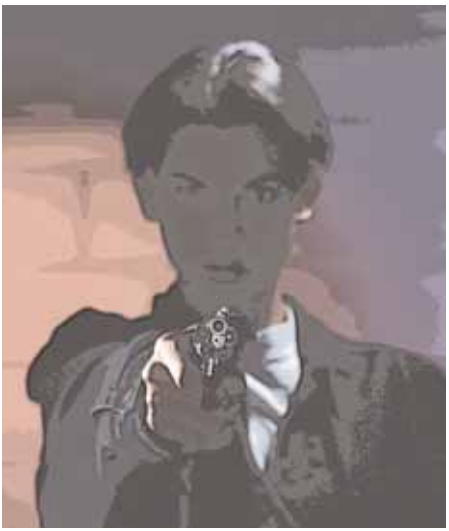
It is easy to point out his personal faults. Rousseau was a terrible husband, and so irresponsible as a father that he gave up all five of his children to orphanages. His life is full of misgivings, shortcomings—and he was aware of a dramatic gap between the way he lived and how he should have lived. In his autobiographical *Confessions,* written when he was in his sixties, he writes, "I should have been a good Christian, a good father, a good friend, a good worker, a good man in every way." It is this gap between his life as it is and conditions as they might be that characterizes Rousseau. We often make the distinction between what is and what ought to be, but Rousseau helps us to understand that these don't always work the way we think they do. Rousseau loved Machiavelli and he is similar to Machiavelli in his insistence on a realistic appraisal of people as they are. But just as with Machiavelli, this is not simply cynical realism the way we normally think of it. The awareness of the gap between things as they are and the ideal can serve other purposes.

We'll see that the vision he describes in *On the Social Contract* of the general will, the sovereign, is not simply a utopian ideal, but an analytical tool for understanding politics. In the beginning of *On the Social Contract,* he says that he considers men as they are and laws as they might be.

Rousseau was famous as a critic of modern society, and he was sensitive to the criticism that it is easier to criticize than to offer a positive alternative. He described *On the Social Contract* as his attempt to offer a positive vision of what legitimate authority would look like. Rousseau's idea is that power cannot be legitimately based on force. A legitimate power cannot ask us to give up our freedom in order to be a member of society. Rousseau says that we

want two things: we want individual freedom and we want the freedom that comes from being a member of something larger. Why is individual freedom important? Because we should not have to sacrifice our freedom. Why is a larger association important? Because political power is not simply a matter of one group forcing its will on another. What is it, then? That's what Rousseau tries to tell us in *On the Social Contract.*

According to Rousseau, the problem with saying that might makes right is not that it is morally wrong, but that it is tautological. If someone is more powerful than you, they are more powerful than you, and the strong can overpower the weak. But that does not make the power legitimate. A mugger may have the power to force you to give him your wallet, but that does not mean he has a right to take your wallet. A powerful government may have the power to force you to obey, but that does not mean it has a legitimate right to make you obey, unless it can legitimately claim that it is doing so in your own interest. That may or may not be possible in any given situation, but Rousseau is saying that this is how we think about it. Why do we pay our taxes? Why do we obey the laws? Why do we do things that we don't necessarily want to do? According to Rousseau, we do so because we recognize that politics is not simply about any individual—including you or me—getting his or her own way.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Rousseau uses a concept called the general will to describe this. He makes it clear that the general will is not an aggregate of individual preferences, but a concept of the public interest that includes our preferences. Does the general will actually exist? Rousseau tells us that this is the wrong question. Rather, it has to exist, because this is the only way that power can be legitimate. When we obey, it is not that we are sacrificing our self-interest, but that we are recognizing a public interest that is larger than our individual interest, but that includes it.

Rousseau gives us several examples to help convince us. Why, he asks, do people accept the outcome of an election even if their side loses? Rousseau says a few deliberately provocative things on this subject, but his point is that we accept the result because we recognize that politics is not about us getting our own way. He is telling us that this is not simply an ideal, but how we actually think about it. Consider a presidential election. A candidate may win 55 percent of the vote, yet the country as a whole still accepts him as president. Why? Rousseau tells us it is because we have a concept of the sovereign very much like the one he describes. We want to believe that the president does not simply represent this particular constituency or interest, but the country as a whole. This is what we want to believe, and if we believe

that a president is not representing the country as a whole, if he does not rise above particular interests, it is one of the most serious criticisms we can make.

On the Social Contract concludes with a controversial chapter called "On Civil Religion." Some people have interpreted this to mean that he thought that there ought to be a state religion, or that the state should replace religion, but Rousseau believes that a legitimate authority should not make us choose between our religion's beliefs and obedience to the state. Even a member of a minority religion should not feel like an outsider. This is another way of saying that the majority does not simply rule in its own interests, and to the extent that it does, its authority is not legitimate. If this is indeed our ideal, we can learn from Rousseau that this requires a concept of the general will and the sovereign very much like the one he describes to us.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How does Rousseau help us to evaluate when an authority is legitimate?
2. How does Rousseau define political power?

Suggested Reading

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *On the Social Contract: With Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy*. Ed. Roger D. Masters. Trans. Judith R. Masters. Cranbury, NJ: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1979.

Other Books of Interest

Cooper, Laurence D. *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.

Lecture 10:
The *Federalist Papers*

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is the *Federalist Papers* by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison.

The *Federalist Papers* is the name we give to a series of eighty-five short arguments published in New York newspapers between October 1787 and May 1788, written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. Their purpose was to gain support for the newly proposed Constitution of the United States for the states to vote on, and they consist of arguments that their current constitution, known as the Articles of Confederation, was too weak and needed replacing. The proposed constitution needed to be ratified by a majority of the states, and the papers had to convince people that it was needed and that a more powerful national government would not threaten the sovereignty of the states or the liberty of the people. But although they had a practical purpose, the *Federalist Papers* also have a more abstract theoretical content as well. In this lecture, we will look at how the *Federalist Papers* address what James Madison described as the problem of faction—the problem of how to limit the power of groups that wanted to rule in their self-interest—and how they thought the new constitution would solve it without creating threats to the public interest of its own.

The early papers warn that a government that is too weak will be vulnerable to attack by foreign countries, but in *Federalist Paper* Number 6, Hamilton argues that a government that is too weak will be vulnerable to conflict from within. After describing episodes from history that illustrate the tendency of people to put their own interests ahead of the public interests, Hamilton makes a reference that will seem obscure to most people today, but which he knew would be potent for his audience: Shays' Rebellion. Daniel Shays was a veteran of the Revolutionary War, who in 1786 disrupted several foreclosure hearings in Massachusetts. During the war, soldiers had been promised that they would be paid after the conclusion of the war, but in the meantime, their wives and elderly parents often had to borrow money to keep their farms in operation. After the war, the government of the United States did not have money to pay the veterans, or it paid them in paper money that no one would accept, and when the veterans were unable to pay their debts, banks foreclosed on their farms. In some areas, there were enough veterans that state legislatures enacted laws favorable to their interests, but Daniel Shays took matters into his own hands as he and a group of veterans interrupted court proceedings. Shays' Rebellion had a dramatic effect on the new nation because it raised the fear that angry, armed, drunken mobs would take control. Hamilton refers to this fear in *Federalist* 6 when he says, "Perhaps, however, a reference, tending to illustrate the general principle, may with propriety be made to a

case which has happened lately among ourselves. If *Shays* had not been a desperate debtor it is much to be doubted whether Massachusetts would have been plunged into a civil war." Hamilton uses the example of Shays' Rebellion to suggest what happens when politics becomes a matter of one group imposing its own will and interests on another. Hamilton suggests that politics must rise above individual interests and that government must find a way to protect the public interest from groups motivated only by promoting their own interests. A quote from a newspaper at the time can help us to see his point. "Sedition itself may make laws." The idea here is that just because a majority has convinced the legislature to pass a law, it does not mean that the law is in the public interest. The *Federalist Papers* raise the same concern that Socrates expressed—the majority can be wrong; might does not make right.


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Illustration depicting rebellious Massachusetts citizens being dispersed by militia during Shays' Rebellion.

The *Federalist Papers* offer a unique solution to this problem. One way to control factions, Madison asserts in *Federalist* 10, is to establish an external authority (think of Hobbes), powerful enough to overpower them. The problem with this solution is that such a power does not exist in the United States, and the authors of the Constitution wanted a national government that was powerful, but not that powerful. And in the *Federalist Papers,* they were trying to assure people that a stronger national government would protect, not threaten, the liberty of the people. They thought there was another way to overcome factions, and that was not through external authority, but through the organization of government itself. They give two famous examples of how this would work. In *Federalist* 10, Madison argues that the size of the nation will protect against factions. He defines a faction as "a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." There are two notable features of this definition. First, he asserts that all groups are motivated by interests contrary to the interests of others and to the public interest. The one thing you can safely assume about any group is that it will put its own interests first. The second feature of this definition is Madison's insistence that even a majority is a faction. The fact that an interest has a majority behind it does not mean that it is in the public interest. Again, might does not make right. But there is a problem. In a system of majority rule, how can the public interest be protected if we assume that even the majority will act contrary to the public interest, especially because they

have ruled out the existence of a strong external authority? Madison argues that the size of the nation will itself provide some safety. In a large country, what he calls the extended republic, there will be so many different interests that it will be very difficult for any faction to convince a majority, and a majority on one issue may not carry over to another issue. A pure democracy is vulnerable, by definition, to the problem of faction, but a republic, especially an extended republic, provides some distance between what a faction wants and what the government does. Madison suggested that there are two ways by which a majority faction can be prevented from obtaining absolute control of the government in a large republic. In the first instance, the faction will have to moderate its position in order to attract a significant number of supporters outside its initial group to become part of a majority coalition. In the second instance, which is characteristic of American politics, the process of getting anything done—good or bad—is made difficult. This is why we have a bicameral legislature and the separation of powers. Government is representative, but it must also deliberate so that it doesn't act rashly. This makes it difficult, even for a majority, to always get its way.

In *Federalist* 51, Madison addresses the same problem again and points to safeguards provided by the separation of powers. In this paper, Madison discusses the organization of the government to do what the extended republic does—slow things down. This is done not by an external authority, but by the organization of government itself. Madison said, "To what expedient shall we finally resort for maintaining in practice the necessary partition of power? The only answer that can be given, as all the exterior provisions are found to be inadequate, the defect must be supplied by so contriving the interior structure of the government as that its several constituent parts may, by their mutual relations, be the means of keeping each other in their proper places." In this way, no one part of government can get its way all of the time. Madison further explained that government is necessary to control men, because human beings are imperfect. He said, "In framing a government, which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed, and in the next place, oblige it to control itself."

The Constitution has these two tasks: the government has to be strong enough to control people so they don't fight, so they don't dominate one another by force, but the government has to have some kind of internal check so it will operate in the public interest. This is the logic of the separation of powers.

A political scientist, Richard Neustaff, said that we don't really have a system of separation of powers in the United States. What we have is a system of separate institutions sharing power. No one group completely controls the legislative powers. The other branches share that power; no one group completely owns the judicial power. Congress and the president also have some power over the judiciary.

Madison is saying the different parts of government share power. This, therefore, is the means of controlling the ambitions of any one particular part of the government. The separation of powers may help to create moderation within the government, as each part needs the other to complete its work.

The other result that can occur, however, is that groups will have their desires legitimated simply by using the process available to them through the government. If their desire to pass a bill favorable to themselves clears all the hurdles of government, it is then a legitimate gain.

Madison suggests that there are two ways in which the public interests will be protected. One is that people, through their representatives, will moderate their demands because of the separation of powers. The parts of government will also moderate their demands because of the internal checks and balances. The other method, though, is that if it is difficult for any one group to get what it wants, the public interests will be protected.

This is a negative argument, however. Madison is saying that if we make it harder for the government to do anything, the result will be in the public interest. This might be true, but there are situations when we might want the government to be effective—to act effectively. The Constitution slows things down and it has a negative concept of the public interest. If we remove the private interest, the public interest is what's left. If we stop a particular group from getting what it wants, then the result will be the public interest. The alternative way of looking at this is that the public interest is something that needs protection. It needs promotion of its own. Madison and the authors of the *Federalist Papers* imagined a government that was not external to power of the people, but was not directly responsive to self-interested factions, either. Is it possible to have it both ways?

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How does Hamilton use the story of Shays' Rebellion to make a point about government and individual interests?
2. What is the logic behind the separation of powers?

Suggested Reading

Hamilton, Alexander, John Jay, and James Madison. *The Federalist Papers*. Intro. Isaac Kramnick. New York: Penguin, 1987.

Other Books of Interest

Edling, Max M. *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Ketcham, Ralph, ed. *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates*. New York: Signet, 2003.

Lecture 11:
Alexis de Tocqueville 1

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America.*

The first thing to understand about *Democracy in America* is that, although it describes politics in the United States, it is really about French politics. Tocqueville wrote the book in order to address the politics of his own time and place. This period in French politics is known as the Bourbon Restoration because the Bourbon monarchy was restored to power after the exile of Napoleon. Politics was divided between those who wanted to restore things the way they were before the French Revolution and who thought that all the problems of the time were the result of the Revolution and those who wanted to continue the reforms of the Revolution and who thought that all the problems of the time were the result of the last remnants of privilege and the old regime. Our terms "right wing" and "left wing" come from this period, as those who wanted to restore the old order sat on the right side of the legislature, known as the Chamber of Deputies, and those who wanted to tear down the old order sat on the left.

Tocqueville did not fit in well in this situation. As someone from an aristocratic family, but who had democratic sympathies, Tocqueville did not find favor with either party of his day, and in effect tried to create a new political position. As he says in the introduction to *Democracy in America,* "We have abandoned whatever good things the old order of society could provide but have not profited from what our present state can offer; we have destroyed an aristocratic society, and settling down complacently among the ruins of an old building, we seem to want to stay there like that forever."

His book *Democracy in America* was enormously popular in the 1830s and made him a well-known figure with a reputation for insight, and he was able to use the success of his book to get himself elected to the Chamber of Deputies. In the book, Tocqueville tries to persuade his French audience that they are too obsessed with the Revolution, and that they saw equality as the result of the Revolution and therefore as something that threatened their liberty and order. Look at the United States, he said. They have not had a revolution, yet they have equality. Equality is the tendency of the time. Even had there not been a revolution, France would have seen an increase in equality something like what they have in the United States.

In the introduction to *Democracy in America,* Tocqueville also described how convoluted things had become. The friends of religion have become the enemies of equality. The friends of order see liberty as a threat. Tocqueville described this as an unnatural state of affairs, and used the American example to show that religion and equality can coexist, and, in fact, that religion can thrive in a democracy. But the book also contains warnings.

In chapter 2 of volume 1, "The Point of Departure for North Americans," Tocqueville explains what France might learn from the United States, by using a complicated metaphor that helps us to understand what he was most concerned about. He starts with a familiar idea—if you want to understand a person, think about how they were as a child, as in Wordsworth's idea that "child is father to the man." But Tocqueville says it is necessary to go back even further, to infancy. So it is, he says, with nations. "If we could go right back to the elements of societies and examine the first records of their histories, I have no doubt that we should there find the first cause of their prejudices, habits, dominating passions, and all that comes to be called the national character. We should there be able to discover the explanation of customs which now seem contrary to the prevailing mores, of laws which seem opposed to recognized principles, and of incoherent opinions still found here and there in society that hang like the broken chains still occasionally dangling from the ceiling of an old building, but carrying nothing. This would explain the fate of certain peoples who seem borne by an unknown force toward a goal of which they themselves are unaware." Without specifically saying so, Tocqueville in this passage is describing France, which has the remnants of privileges and customs of the past, even though they no longer serve any purpose. That is the problem—people are mixed up and do not understand where they are going. They do not understand what forces are driving events. They are swept up by things they do not understand and cannot control. The result is that they feel powerless.

The problem is that the impulse to look into the past only comes when it is in fact too late to do so. Tocqueville says, "The taste for analysis comes to nations only when they are growing old, and when at last they do turn their thoughts to the cradle, the mists of time have closed around it. Ignorance and pride have woven fables around it, and behind all that the truth is hidden." France is cut off from its own past, its own origins and identity. This recalls the passage in the introduction where he asks, "Where are we, then? Men of religion fight against freedom, and lovers of liberty attack religions; noble and generous spirits praise slavery, while low, servile minds preach independence; honest and enlightened citizens are the enemies of all progress, while men without patriotism or morals make themselves the apostles of civilization and enlightenment!" Here is where the American example comes in. The United States is young enough a country that we can go back and examine its origins. But that is not really the point. The real value, for France, of studying the United States is not that it makes it possible to see its origins, but rather by studying the United States, the French can get some perspective on what is happening to them.

Democracy in America was widely praised in the United States, especially because it pointed out the many favorable aspects of the American experience to that time. Yet while Tocqueville had much to say in favor of American democracy, he also pointed out what he considered to be serious flaws. His criticisms were difficult for some Americans to accept. One of the most difficult criticisms for Americans to accept was Tocqueville's discussion of the omnipotence of the majority; the tyranny of the majority. These seemed particularly critical and most Americans denied that it existed. Tocqueville's point, however, is not simply to praise or criticize. He uses the example to

help his French audience see that if the people are given power through equality, the danger is not that they will be inclined to abuse it, but rather that there will be a tendency to become weak through their dependency on the rule of the majority. Tocqueville said, “I know of no country in which, generally speaking, there is less independence of mind, and true freedom of discussion, than in America.” Tocqueville is, in effect, describing the new model of tyranny in his time. Tyranny of old required chains and the hangman’s noose, while in a democracy, tyranny leaves the body alone, but goes straight to the soul. One keeps his privileges, but loses the esteem of his fellow citizens. Although harsh in its delivery, this tyranny has only the potential to occur in the United States. America has counterbalanced the tyranny of the majority with the fact that people take control over their own lives. Basically, there are things people can do without the necessity of government intervention.

Tocqueville’s chapters on voluntary associations in the United States are the passages from *Democracy in America* quoted most frequently today. Tocqueville points out that Americans are quick to form voluntary associations for a wide variety of purposes whenever a need arises. But what is his point?

In Tocqueville’s time, many people, especially many aristocrats, believed that the Revolution had destroyed the traditions and institutions that bound people together, and that the resulting isolation would have the effect of leaving people vulnerable to mob rule.

To the left, Tocqueville argued that liberty was not the automatic result of the elimination of privilege. The destruction of the old order and the resulting equality left people weaker and more vulnerable to tyranny. To the right, he said that liberty and equality did not mean the end of order and religion. In fact, he said, they are quite compatible, and that they could only be achieved by moving forward, not by looking backward.

Tocqueville argued that aristocrats in France were worried about the wrong thing. They worried that the middle and working classes would become too strong. Tocqueville argued to the contrary that he worried that they would become too weak. The aristocracy feared freedom of the press and participation by the middle class. Tocqueville showed them that the exercise of freedom helped people to become free and gave them a stake in society. In the United States, for example, even though people lack the traditions and social ties of the old order, they still manage to find ways to work together. Voluntary associations spring up spontaneously, almost miraculously. These associations give people the experience of working together, even if the tendency of the time is isolation.

Tocqueville is tenuous in what he feels may come from the new order of things, but he is emphatic in stating that he knows France can never go back to the way things were before the Revolution. “I find those very blind who think to restore the monarchy of Henry the IV or Louis XIV. For my part, when I consider the state already reached by European nations and toward which all are tending, I am led to believe that there will soon be no room except for either democratic freedom or the tyranny of Caesars.”

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What does Tocqueville say is the inherent problem with looking into the past?
2. Why was *Democracy in America* praised in the United States?

Suggested Reading

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Lecture 12:
Alexis de Tocqueville 2

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America.*

In this lecture, we will look at Tocqueville's concept of individualism and his analysis of the family in the United States.

Tocqueville's concept of individualism is one of his most important contributions to political theory because it reveals his understanding of what political theory does. Tocqueville did not invent this word, but he changed its meaning. He distinguishes individualism from selfishness in two ways. First, he points out that selfishness is a vice as old as human beings. It has always been with us and always will be. Individualism, he asserts, is something new. Selfishness is a weakness, but individualism "is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself. . . . Individualism is based on misguided judgement rather than depraved feeling. It is due more to inadequate understanding than to perversity of heart." The problem with individualism is that it makes people more vulnerable to tyranny, as it isolates them and makes them believe that they cannot make a difference in society.

But although Tocqueville presents individualism as a problem, he does not offer a solution and he does not portray it as all bad. Basically, he says, we do not have a choice. It is never going away, but individualism is compatible with collective action, and Tocqueville connects his discussion of individualism with his point about voluntary associations. Because it is a failure of understanding, it can be addressed by theory. Tocqueville does not portray himself as a doctor who diagnoses a problem and then prescribes a solution. Rather, he describes the problem and gives it a name so that we might understand it and manage it. Individualism is not going to go away, but it does not have to lead us to weakness and vulnerability, either. Somehow or other, the American example shows us that even people who believe in individualism can cooperate and work together, and his book is designed to help us understand and appreciate opportunities to overcome its isolating effects.

At the end of the book, Tocqueville discusses what sort of despotism democratic countries have to fear. Like the *Federalist Papers,* he warns that the real danger is not attack by an external power, but from within. He fears that people will become too weak and doubt their own power to change anything. The new despotism will be unlike the old, which could overpower people and enslave them, but which could not get inside them. The potential for despotism, Tocqueville warns, will greatly surpass anything we have seen in the

past, because it will conquer us from within. In effect, it will get inside our heads. George Orwell's *1984* is a good example of a power Tocqueville might have imagined.

Tocqueville also discussed family in *Democracy in America.* He uses the word "family" as a metaphor for society in general and how people get along with one another. Again, Tocqueville uses the example of the changes in American society in relationships between members of a family and between people and their government. He contrasts families in aristocratic times with those in democratic times. Tocqueville says that in aristocratic times, people are tied together by their place in society and even by their birth order, as in primogeniture (the oldest son inherited all the property). This created a situation whereby the children were completely dependent on their parents for all their needs until the death of the parents. Upon the death of the parents (especially the father), the siblings became dependent upon the oldest brother for their needs. With the elimination of primogeniture, all the property was divided between all the brothers and sisters. The effect of this was that larger estates became divided into smaller and smaller property holdings over time, but were distributed among more people. The result is that people had to find new, less formal ways to interact and to relate with one another. The bond of property was replaced by the bond of sharing—an Aristotelian relationship.

Tocqueville further emphasizes the equality of democracy in families by saying that, because there is less friction than occurs in families living under primogeniture, there are closer, more heartfelt bonds created from birth, at least in the ideal sense. This he equates to all people living under democracy who share equally in the opportunity presented by their equal status.

Finally, Tocqueville concludes *Democracy in America* with a discussion of the sort of despotism democratic nations have to fear. Like Thucydides, he says the real threat to freedom didn't come from outside, but rather from internal division and internal weakness. He explained it this way. When the power of the Roman emperors was at its height, the different people in the empire still preserved their various customs and mores even though they obeyed the same monarch and were subject to his whims. This was often in the form of isolated, yet violent, repression. However, Tocqueville went on to say that if despotism emerged in a modern democratic society, the resulting problems would probably be more widespread and less violent. He foresaw groups of men who would be more concerned for their own welfare and for the welfare of their families or limited groups, and therefore oblivious to the needs of others in society. This would create a situation where the government, like a doting father, keeps his children dependent, but hinders their growth.

Tocqueville is used by all facets of democratic societies who quote him as a champion for their particular cause. Liberals cite his work as calling for more power to the people, while conservatives allude to his reasoning for less government dependency. The truth is a little more complicated. Tocqueville described himself as a liberal of a new sort. In our time, rather than looking to Tocqueville for slogans, he should be looked to for guidance about what things make us strong, what things make us weak, and what are the opportunities available for us to be more involved with one another to avoid the dangers of individual isolation.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What is Tocqueville's concept of individualism?
2. How did Tocqueville use family as a metaphor for society in general?

Suggested Reading

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Lecture 13:
Karl Marx: *The Communist Manifesto*

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto.*

Karl Marx is one of the most difficult political theorists for us to read and understand. One problem is that we feel compelled to take sides when we read Marx, to reject him or to convert to Marxist. We don't run into this problem when we read Aristotle, for example, but it is hard for us to accept the idea that we can simply learn from Marx without signing up or rejecting him out of hand. Another reason it is hard for us to read Marx is that his writings were often situational. That is, he did not write with the idea of producing a timeless classic, but would instead often address a controversy of his day in order to raise issues that he thought were being neglected. So his writings contain criticisms of politicians and political movements that mean little to us today. *The Communist Manifesto* contains many references of this sort, and it was in fact written as a statement about a particular political movement that has long since vanished. But *The Communist Manifesto* is a good place to start to see what we can learn from Marx, regardless of whether we agree or disagree.

Marx thought in terms of the movement of history and believed that his time could best be thought of as a transition between an age in decline and a new one yet to be born. He saw capitalism as both a stage of history and an agent of change. His works therefore have an ambiguity that is difficult for us to keep clear. He saw capitalism as a problem, as the source of many of the problems of his time, but he also saw it as a necessary stage of history. So he was not simply "against" capitalism, because he thought this would be like being against winter or death. He described the revolutionary changes that capitalism introduced, but argued that capitalism was itself in transition. We like to believe that conditions have always been the way they are and that they will always be this way, but Marx reminds us that things are always changing. Furthermore, he shows us that because politics is always about relations of power between the strong and the weak, that our assumptions about history and change are political; they are both reflections of who we are and at the same time, existing power relations are propped up by what we tell ourselves about what is necessary and what is our choice. Marx tells us that the things that we tell ourselves are matters of choice are usually conditioned by our place in society, and the things we tell ourselves are necessary are usually really decisions that we make. In other words, we usually get this backwards.

The Communist Manifesto begins with the famous phrase, "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism." He portrays the Communist Party partly as an actual party, but also as a world-historical movement propelled by a force independent of particular situations. Communism represents something that scares everyone and that has taken on a life of its own.

Unlike other political theorists who want to believe that politics is more than one group imposing its will on another, Marx insists that, in fact, that's all it is. "The history of all hitherto existing society," they write, "is the history of class struggles." That is all there is, he tells us, and the key to understanding any given moment in history is to discover these struggles. Whether we look at ancient Rome, the Middle Ages, or modern times, politics is about the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed. The key to understanding the present time, according to Marx and Engels, is to discern in an honest way the destructive and revolutionary power of capitalism. Consider the changes that all of us have seen in the last twenty years, as jobs move overseas, as globalization transforms every aspect of our lives. Marx tells us that these are not random or isolated changes, but the result of the destructive force of capitalism. Capitalism itself is not even the result of a particular economic system so much as a force driving history in ways that sound incredibly modern.

The bourgeoisie have changed everything into a financial transaction. Work, family, religion, and art have all become financial arrangements. Tradition and custom hardly mean a thing because they have given way to the needs of capitalism and the bourgeoisie. Where we live, what we do for a living, and who we marry are all driven by economic needs. The bourgeoisie "has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-earners. The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation into a mere money relation."

Marx and Engels use strident prose and dramatic pronouncements to propel the work forward. The prose and rhetoric of the *Manifesto* mimic the relentless drive of capitalism through history, sweeping away all criticism and hesitation. Marx and Engels argue that capitalism has stripped human relations to the barest of essentials; it's all about money. He also personifies capitalism by referring to the bourgeoisie, who think of themselves as normal, matter of fact, common sense people, but who they say misunderstand their class position. The bourgeoisie like to think of themselves as a universal class—think about the way modern politicians try to appeal to the middle class—but Marx and Engels portray them as catalysts of change who do not see the exploitation that their success rests on.

Marx can help us to understand why we think we can change some things but not others. We tend to think that there are forces driving events that we have no control over. But Marx tells us that we tend to get this wrong. We think we have no control over things that are actually our choice, and that the things we think we do by choice are actually the result of our place in society. It is not so different from the lesson of Oedipus.

Readers are tempted to reject Marx altogether because they do not find his vision of communism to be convincing. But at a time when the forces driving events seem out of our control, Marx challenges us to understand that the relations of power driving events today are not remote, but are played out in our everyday relations of work and commerce, and even in our understanding of who we are and why we do what we do. Even if we don't call ourselves Marxists and even if we are not ready to renounce capitalism, we might still benefit from reading him as a theorist who encourages us to think about what we can do to change the world and to think critically when we tell ourselves we are powerless in the face of world events.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Why is Marx such a difficult political theorist to read?
2. How did Marx portray the Communist Party?

Suggested Reading

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. New York: Signet, 1998.

Other Books of Interest

Marx, Karl. *Karl Marx on Society and Social Change: With Selections by Friedrich Engels*. Ed. Neil Smelser. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Meister, Robert. *Political Identity: Thinking Through Marx*. Blackwell Publishers, 1989.

Wheen, Francis. *Karl Marx: A Life*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2000.

Lecture 14:
Game Theory

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Kenneth A. Shepsle's and Mark S. Bonchek's *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behaviors, and Institutions.*

Game theory, or rational choice theory, or formal theory, has been around for centuries, but became a more prominent part of the study of politics after World War II. This is a good way to conclude the course, because although game theorists often distinguish what they do from the traditional political theory that we have been studying in our course, game theory gives us a way to consider the relevance of traditional theory today. We are going to look at two concepts in game theory: the prisoner's dilemma and the tragedy of the commons.

David Hume imagined a situation in which two farms are adjacent to a marsh. Each farmer would benefit if the marsh were drained, so the land could be cultivated, and ideally, the two farmers would work together. But something odd happens when one farmer realizes that he would enjoy the same benefit if the other farmer did all the work. And the other farmer realizes the same. Ideally, both farmers would work together, but each wants to avoid a situation in which he does all the work but the other enjoys the benefits. The point is that each farmer has a powerful incentive to not drain the field, even though it would be in their best interest to do it.

This is also called the "prisoner's dilemma." Imagine a situation in which two partners in crime are arrested and interrogated in separate rooms. If both prisoners keep quiet, there will not be enough evidence to convict them. So it would be in their best interest to keep quiet, but it turns out that they have a powerful incentive to confess and implicate the other. Why? Because if they keep quiet and the other prisoner implicates them, they will receive a harsher sentence. So game theory tells us that each prisoner has a powerful incentive to confess, even though it would be in their best interest to keep quiet.

It is not a coincidence that game theory was applied to politics after World War II. One reason is that it fit the politics of the Cold War so well. The United States and the Soviet Union could not afford to trust one another, yet both wanted to avoid a large-scale war. The other reason had to do with the participation of mathematicians and scientists in the war effort. As they witnessed the large-scale destruction of the war, many mathematicians and scientists wondered if there was some way they could use their intelligence to come up with an alternative to war. Game theory provided a way. It seemed to fit in perfectly with modern realities. It assumed that each nation would act in its self-interest, which was an advantage, because unlike the view of Plato or Aristotle (or so they thought!), it did not assume that the other side would act benevolently. The belief was that game theory would help to develop

strategies for avoiding war without capitulation while also avoiding the great potential dangers of a mistake.

Game theory could be applied very effectively to an issue like nuclear disarmament. Ideally, both the United States and the Soviet Union would disarm, but the consequences would be disastrous if one disarmed and the other didn't, so neither side could take the risk. This helped to explain the incentive to stockpile weapons, not because of an intent to use them, but because the arms race was actually an alternative to war against an enemy that could not be trusted.

Political scientists have found so many ways to apply the prisoner's dilemma that some have gone so far as to define politics as the attempt to transcend prisoner's dilemma situations.

The prisoner's dilemma is a model that leads to another model, known as the Problem of the Commons, or the Tragedy of the Commons. Imagine a village where a pasture is held in common. All the people in the village can graze their sheep there. This serves them so well that the size of their flocks increases to the point that if everyone continues to graze their flocks at the same rates, the common pasture will be depleted. Everyone can see this coming and everyone knows that it would be in their best interest if they cut back a little to avoid overgrazing. But everyone has a powerful incentive to continue to overgraze. Why? Each realizes that if they do the right thing and cut back, their neighbor might not. The villager will have smaller profits, while their neighbor has larger profits. Thus, game theory helps us to understand the incentive to overgraze, even though it is not in anyone's best interest. This is known as a socially destructive incentive, or a perverse incentive.

The Tragedy of the Commons is widely used as a model in policymaking because it helps policy analysts identify the incentive to do something. Policy makers understand that a policy will only be effective if it gets at the incentive that leads to the problem in the first place. One application of the Tragedy of the Commons is overfishing. For the government policy makers, the problem is how to decide the most effective way to prevent overfishing. If the government simply imposes a fine, fishermen may continue to overfish, because the fine is not a strong enough incentive to overcome the fear that their competitors will continue to overfish and gain a competitive advantage.

There is one other aspect to the problem. Even if someone wants to do the right thing in a Tragedy of the Commons situation, he or she may still be discouraged from doing so, because they tell themselves it will not make any difference. That is, they tell themselves that if they refrain from overfishing, it will only make a very small difference if no one else does the same, and if their competitor refrains from overfishing and they continue, it will not do very much harm. So people tell themselves that what they do as individuals will not make any difference one way or another, regardless of what others do.

If we think of how this applies to the marketplace, there are two possible responses to the Tragedy of the Commons. It could be taken as a reason for government intervention. The Tragedy of the Commons shows why the marketplace will create a problem and will not be capable of solving it, unless you consider depletion of natural resources and bankruptcies all around to be a

solution. This could be seen as a reason for outside intervention by the government, to force us to do something that is ultimately in our self-interest, but which we may have an incentive to avoid. As George Bernard Shaw is reported to have said, the role of government is not to do what we want, but to make us do what we don't want to do. On the other hand, in some situations, some people might argue that the problem with a Tragedy of the Commons situation is the commons itself. That is, the problem of overgrazing arises because no one owns the commons. People would not overgraze their own land, so to some the solution is privatization. This, in fact, has been applied in overfishing situations by allowing fishermen to buy and sell shares of fishing rights, so that if they want to overfish, they can only do so if a competitor is willing to sell them some of their rights. This has been applied to pollution, where businesses that pollute are allowed to buy and sell "dirts," units of pollution that in effect privatize the commons. Game theory does not always give us a definitive answer that will apply in any situation, but it gives us a model that can be used to identify the incentive that is the source of the problem and to analyze whether possible policy solutions will address the incentive that causes the problem in the first place.

This brings us back to the problems we started with. People recognize that there are problems, but they feel powerless to do anything about them. People may want to do the right thing, but may believe it will require them to sacrifice their self-interest, or the impulse to do the right thing will not work if they cannot trust others to do the same, or they may believe that the golden rule will not be sufficient to avoid the Tragedy of the Commons in the absence of an external authority. This sounds very much like the problems addressed by Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Hobbes, the *Federalist Papers,* and the other works of traditional political theory. Furthermore, the study of political theory can help us to recognize that the impulses that give rise to game theory are very much like those of traditional political theory. So modern theory may have more in common with traditional political theory, and traditional theory may be more modern than most people realize.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What is game theory?
2. Why is the Tragedy of the Commons widely used as a model of policymaking?

Suggested Reading

Shepsle, Kenneth A., and Mark S. Bonchek. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behaviors, and Institutions*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1997.

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