

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.1 of 76

Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

Video Part 1

Course Preliminaries – PowerPoint Presentation

Pearl of Wisdom: The Rule of 72

I. Initial Questions

A. So what is Political Theory, Political Philosophy, anyway?

Political philosophy is a branch of all philosophy, it is a quest for specifically political truth. Political theory offers answers to questions that philosophers ask, in the form of an integrated whole.

B. What makes a philosophy specifically political? (as versus economic, social, etc.). What is politics?

What is the realm of the political? Politics has to do with power.

The great American political scientist Harold Lasswell defined it in the

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.2 of 76

title of his seminal book *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*, published in 1936. The realm of the political is very broad indeed. There are many things that we experience in life that seem to be everyday matters that are actually very political. One of the examples that I like to offer is one with which I am personally familiar.

When I was a very young Assistant Professor of Political Science at The Johns Hopkins University, I soon found a friend in one of the other **four** female professors there at the time. We shared an interest in baroque music, and personally, I found it difficult to resist the idea of getting a season ticket to the Kennedy Center in Washington. At the time, I had been fortunate enough to be able to purchase a small townhome, but she was not, so this was something that she could afford because she was trying to save every penny for a down payment. I offered to pay for the tickets so that we could both go – we were both single, and I certainly did not want to go to such concerts alone! That idea made her uncomfortable, and it was understandable

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.3 of 76

why. I understood that intuitively -- because I would have felt the same way. So we reached an agreement: I would purchase the season tickets, and she would select a restaurant where we could have dinner before or after each concert or would have me over to share lunch at her apartment. I should add that the deal is pretty good for her -- because I was not a big eater.

Here is another example. I did a lot of my dissertation research in Japan and Hong Kong (my topic was too sensitive to be researched in China). In Japan, when you are fortunate enough to obtain an interview with someone, say, a politician or an esteemed scholar, you must present him or her with a small gift of some kind. It could be a nice handkerchief or inexpensive scarf, for example. One had to be very careful about how much you spent on the gift. It was very important not to spend too much on a gift given to someone you are meeting for the first time, and this is where politics comes in. If you met someone for the first time and offered him something like a bottle of Scotch that you had purchased in the

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.4 of 76

Duty Free shop on your way to Tokyo, that would have been a mistake. For one thing, such a bottle was extremely expensive at the time -- \$100 for a single gift was very expensive for a grad student to pay. So, thankfully, it was not an option for me, so I was able to avoid that trap. But the question is, “What made it a trap?” If you give someone a gift that is too expensive, you make them indebted to you – which is precisely the opposite of your intention. There is nothing worse than making someone feel as if they owe you a debt that they cannot possibly repay. Therefore, one must be very careful when you engage in the gift giving tradition in Japan, and, indeed, anywhere else.

C. Why should we be interested in specifically Chinese and Japanese political thought?

To me, this is fairly obvious, although it may not be obvious to most Americans. In most universities in the U.S. and Europe, the field of political theory includes only Western European theory and a limited

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.5 of 76

amount of American theory. This reflects an exceptionally narrow appreciation of the importance of political theory and its influence on politics and international relations. The most recent economic statistics, as of 2020, show that China and Japan are #2 and #3 respectively in terms of GDP (the U.S. remains #1), and together the two nations account for almost the equivalent of the GDP of the U.S. The economic and political impact of the two countries is extensive well beyond their borders, and China’s current leadership is waging an aggressive campaign to overtake the U.S. both in terms of GDP and international economic and political leadership. Although in my view, Chinese and Japanese political thought are fascinating and important in their own right, one cannot deny the significance of the implications of their ideas for the future of world politics. Even though the current Chinese regime continues to advocate “socialism with Chinese characteristics” based on Marxism-Leninism, the ways in which Chinese leaders think about

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.6 of 76

politics and warfare continue to be influenced by traditional Chinese perspectives on politics. Likewise, although the cult of the emperor that contributed to Japanese ultranationalism during the 1930s and 1940s has waned since the emperor declared that he was no longer to be considered divine after Japan’s defeat in World War II, the way that Japanese people have thought about politics continues to exercise an influence there and in Japan’s relations with other countries. Moreover, these Chinese and Japanese influences have extended well beyond China and Japan to the rest of East Asia as well. This course will allow you to understand these abiding influences on contemporary East Asian politics.

II. Review of the syllabus, and the course objectives, requirements, and mechanics

Video Part 2

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.7 of 76

III. Political legitimacy as a key *problématique* of political philosophy

A. What is political legitimacy?

One, if not the, central problem of political theory, from antiquity to modernity is that of political legitimacy.

Political Legitimacy has to do with the relationship between ruler and ruled; or between the citizens or subjects and the political system as a whole. It involves the reconciliation of public with private interests.. The citizens accept the rule of the regime because they believe it is in their own interest(s) to do so.

Thus, we can say the following:

B. Legitimacy has 3 interrelated aspects, or, if you will, three successive stages in the establishment of it in a given political system:

- 1) **Legitimacy is accorded** to a regime/a government when the commands/inhibitions of the government are found to be in harmony with private morality/private notions of right & wrong.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.8 of 76

- 2) **Citizens accord legitimacy** to the regime. Citizens accept the commands of the government because they *are* its commands. They are prepared to do this because they can assume that the government’s commands are in accord with their own private morality. (“It’s the law....”)
- 3) **Citizens suffer the “automatic penalty of psychic conflict” – i.e., guilt**—if they disobey the government. They internalize obedience to the government as if it were their parents. (e.g., if you are speeding and you suddenly hear a siren....)

In the view of some scholars (for example, Chalmers Johnson, a former Professor of Political Science at UC Berkeley and then here at UCSD – now deceased – as he wrote in *Revolutionary Change*), a revolution occurs because a regime has lost legitimacy. Moreover, a new, revolutionary or successor regime must establish its own legitimacy. Let us examine how this notion figures in both ancient and modern

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.9 of 76

Western political thought. We will then be better prepared to recognize it when we see it in Chinese and Japanese thought as well.

IV. Political legitimacy in ancient Western philosophy: The Socratic Lie
or noble lie

In ancient Greece, Socrates claimed that a good society needs what he called a “noble lie”, “some one noble lie to persuade, in the best case, even the rulers, but if not them, the rest of the community” that they belong to the polity and that the hierarchy of ruler and ruled was legitimate (yes, that word again) and just. Socrates used the term *lie* deliberately, but not to indicate that it was necessarily false. What matters is not whether this legitimating myth is true or false, but simply that the people believe it enough to render the government stable.

Socrates’s lie held that the people of the city-state

. . . were under the earth within, being fashioned and reared

themselves, and their arms and other tools being crafted.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.10 of 76

When the job had been completely finished, then the earth, which is their mother, sent them up. and now, as though the land they were in were a mother and a nurse, they must plan for and defend it, if anyone attacks, and they must think of the other citizens as brothers and born of the earth.¹

Here, we have an example of a myth of an **organic polity**. The organic polity exists before those who comprise it; and it is legitimate because it is natural. The origin of the Athenian state prior to the existence of the citizens themselves legitimated their acceptance of the existing hierarchy of political rule. "The god, in fashioning those of you who are competent to rule, mixed gold in at their birth," wrote Plato. Others were born with the "admixture of bronze or iron" instead of gold.

This Famous lie[, then,]consists of two very diverse parts.

According to the first part, all the members of the city, and

¹ *The Republic of Plato*, trans. with Notes and an Interpretive Essay by Allan Bloom (New York and London: Basic Books, Inc., 1968), pp. 93-94.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.11 of 76

particularly the warriors, were born from the earth and educated and equipped prior to emerging from it. If the citizens believe the tale, they will have a blood tie to the country; their relationship to it will have the same immediacy as does their relationship to the family. . . . It identifies city and regime with country, which is the object of the most primitive political loyalty.

“The second part of the lie gives divine sanction to the natural hierarchy of human talents and virtues while enabling the regime to combine the political advantages of this hierarchy with those of mobility. The problem is to establish a regime in which the hierarchy established by law reflects the natural one, or in which virtue is the only title to membership in the ruling class.”²

² Bloom, "Interpretive Essay," in *The Republic of Plato*, pp. 366-367.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.12 of 76

Now as we shall see, it is exactly this kind of “noble lie” that subsequently served the leaders of Meiji Japan, the oligarchs who built the new modern Japanese state after defeating Tokugawa feudalism in 1868.

Video Part 3

V. Political legitimacy in modern Western philosophy: Social contract theory

A. Modern v. ancient political thought

Now we shall examine how the notion of political legitimacy is treated in modern Western political thought. I have two objectives in doing this:

1. First, I want to make sure that you all understand the central concepts we are going to use in this course to understand Chinese and Japanese political philosophy. As we study the various schools of Chinese

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.13 of 76

and Japanese thought this quarter, we are going to ask how each school of thought answers the following three (3) questions:

- a. What is the nature of men and women? Is man (referring to both men and women) fundamentally good or fundamentally evil?

- b. What is the nature of the human condition? Is it good or bad? Not surprisingly, one of the reasons that political philosophy exists is because individual philosophers found the human condition dismal, unacceptable, in one way or another.

- c. What is the solution to the problems noted in (b) above with respect to the political realm?

As philosophers answer these questions, they provide their own noble lie or Socratic lie to legitimate the kind of polity that they prescribe. Think about how Socrates formulated the problem as described by his

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.14 of 76

student Plato in *The Republic*. There was a problem that Socrates identified. He believed that the best leader would be a philosopher-king, because, for him, as for all ancient philosophers, both Western and Asian, the realm of the political involved morality. This is why political scientists demarcate the break between ancient and modern philosophy with Niccolò Machiavelli. Machiavelli's concern in *The Prince* was not with morality but rather with how a prince could establish and maintain his power in a new polity. Machiavelli even transmogrified the definition of the Italian word *virtú* so that it meant not virtue but skillfulness, *technē*, that is, the skillfulness of the prince in using various methods by which to establish and maintain his authority. Some modern political Western theorists were very much concerned with moral questions: John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Karl Marx. However, they acknowledged that politics was not primarily about morality, but about power.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.15 of 76

2. Second, this is a course in *comparative theory*. Within the course we will be comparing not only Chinese and Japanese political thought, but also Chinese and Japanese ideas with Western ideas. I know that many of you have never studied theory before. Therefore, I want to take this opportunity to establish a level playing field for all of you in this course, by introducing to you – or reiterating to those of you who have studied this before – the basic ideas of ancient and modern Western political philosophers.

So let us return to Plato and Socrates for a moment. In *The Republic*, we see Plato and his teacher Socrates identify a central problem in the need to establish the legitimacy of the polity and of its leaders. Socrates’s prescription was the *noble lie*. In that noble lie, note that the type of polity that Socrates attempted to legitimate was an *organic polity*. You see, another characteristic of ancient political philosophy is that the ancients believed that what was natural was good. An *organic polity* is good and is

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.16 of 76

legitimate because it is natural. Socioeconomic hierarchy was natural, the product of what had been given to men and women by the gods. Therefore, it was good.

B. Modern Western political thought

By contrast, in modern Western political thought, it is what is the product of human reason – what is the product of human artifice – what is artificial, then – that is good. It is good because it represents the triumph of reason and rationality over superstition and blind obedience to the Pope. This was really the entire point of the Enlightenment.

Yes, this sea-change in Western political thought was related to Christianity and to the Reformation, which was happening within Christendom. In the 16th century, Martin Luther (1483-1546) had no hope of making any lasting impact with his Ninety-five Theses (1517) without the support of his local prince. The prince was asserting his right to rule in

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.17 of 76

resistance to the Pope, by claiming the *divine right of kings* to rule. The prince was claiming, in effect, that he had been given a direct right to rule by God, and he asserted that right against the alleged prerogatives of the Pope. In other words, the Reformation, a religious movement, occurred in tandem with a political initiative on the part of kings and princes to assert their rights against the Roman Catholic Church. The one movement facilitated the other and vice versa. In other words, it is also difficult to imagine that Europe's princes – in Germany as well as in England – would have had success without support from the theological movement as well.

This brings us to the next stage in the development of the legitimation of monarchical authority in Renaissance Europe. This was the development of **social contract theory**. We will examine the work of the three (3) major social contract theorists: (1) Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679); (2) John Locke (1632-1704); and (3) Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). We begin in 17th century England.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.18 of 76

Video Part 4

A. The context for the emergence of social contract theory

The context for the emergence of social contract theory in England was the struggle to maintain the **absolute monarchy**. We are going to discuss this in terms of **monarchical absolutism**, which means that the monarch, the king, had absolute power. The will, the command, of the king was law (this assertion is known as the “**command theory of law**”). Social contract theory emerged within the context of the conflict between King James I and the British Parliament (which James dissolved after only 8 weeks in 1614, when the House of Commons hesitated to grant him the financial subsidies that he believed he required). King James then continued to rule without any input from Parliament until 1621. He was finally forced to call another session of Parliament because of his need to raise funds to go to war against the Habsburg Empire. It is significant that so much of this political conflict concerned finances, because, although

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.19 of 76

there were certainly religious aspects of the conflict in England (Catholic versus Protestant) -- what was even more significant was the role of the rise of the *bourgeoisie* -- especially the commercial bourgeoisie in the conflict. This burgeoning class asserted itself through its representation in the House of Commons. The English Civil Wars (1642-1648) (also known as “The Puritan Revolution”, since most of the King's opponents were Puritans) essentially consisted of conflict between King Charles I and the parliamentarians, and they resulted in the defeat and execution of the King and the establishment of a republican commonwealth. This settlement of the conflict was assured in the Glorious Revolution (The Revolution of 1688), in which King James II of England was overthrown by the Parliamentarians with aid of the invading Dutch King William III (William III, who ascended the throne as William III). Most of the opposition to the King came from the landed aristocracy and merchants, who sought (1) to eliminate financial and commercial restrictions so that a “laissez-faire”

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.20 of 76

economy free of interference by the state could be maintained; and (2) to play a more significant role in making religious and foreign policies.

What were the consequences of these Civil Wars?

- The Declaration of Rights and the Bill of Rights (1689) redefined the relationship between the monarch and his or her subjects and barred any future Catholic succession to the throne.

- Royal power to suspend and to dispense with the law was abolished. This marked the end of monarchical absolutism, as the monarch was no longer above the law. You heard the refrain “no man is above the law” during both impeachment hearings of former President Trump – this is the source of that refrain.

- The Crown could no longer levy taxes or maintain a standing army in peacetime without the consent of Parliament.

As we look back on the events of the English Civil Wars, we find that:

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.21 of 76

a. **Thomas Hobbes**--who accompanied the exiled Prince Charles (son of King Charles I) to France -- wrote the *Leviathan* in 1651 in order to legitimate the power of the British throne that was under threat. He defended monarchical absolutism against the claims of the parliamentarians to share in power, establishing a command theory of law. According to Hobbes, the monarch alone is the law-giver.

b. **John Locke**, on the other hand, wrote 2 treatises to justify the outcome of the Glorious Revolution. He defended the parliamentary perspective in his social contract theory, which provided for the possibility of legitimate revolution. In his theory the power of the government was limited by the fact that the government had a fiduciary responsibility to the people. In other words, the monarch could not simply do as he or she pleased.

A. Thomas Hobbes

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.22 of 76

Let us examine Thomas Hobbes’s defense of monarchical absolutism in more detail. He develops it by positing a scenario in which there was no higher power in the form of the government. This is called the “state of nature”. In “the state of nature” men and women are reliant upon their own individual strength, their individual physical powers, to respond to threats.

Hobbes’s argument is that, in the state of nature, where there is no government, we find man in his essential nature. Let us read from *The Leviathan*: (By the way, I have uploaded two pages of excerpts from *The Leviathan* as a handout to Canvas. It will make it easier for you to follow, if you take a look at that now. I have put the actual quotations in italics, to make it easier for you to distinguish the quotations from my words.)

So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; second, diffidence; thirdly, glory.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.23 of 76

The first maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons, or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man. For war consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known, and therefore the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.24 of 76

rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together; so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is peace.

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious 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

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.25 of 76

*death; and the life of man, [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.*³

Thus, Hobbes argued that reasonable men, given all the potential benefits of civilized society, would have decided to give up some of their right to use their own physical force to a power that had much greater force – *The Leviathan* – a force that would hold all men in awe.. That Leviathan (a sea monster) is the absolute monarchy. It is that monarchical absolutism that assures that we, as human beings, can live without being in a state of war of every man against every man.

The state of nature, then, where we have no absolute monarchy, is a state of war, because man is naturally evil. Therefore, the state of nature is a state of war. As Hobbes ends the passage I have just shared with you, it is

³ Source: *Social and Political Philosophy*, eds. John Somerville and Ronald E. Santoni (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., Anchor Books, 1963), pp. 142-143.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.26 of 76

clear that the state of nature is so horrible that no reasonable person would want to live in it. Hence, he concludes, we must support the absolute monarchy.

B. John Locke

John Locke, on the other hand, defended the parliamentary perspective in his social contract theory, which provided for the possibility of legitimate revolution. That was the solution that prevailed in England and was ratified by the Glorious Revolution in 1688. Unlike Hobbes, Locke established as the point of departure for his social contract theory the proposition that man is fundamentally good. The state of nature, therefore, is not a state of war. How do we explain bad behavior, then? Such behavior described by Hobbes can be explained by bad circumstances. According to Locke the two circumstances of scarcity and spoilage explain why people encroach on other people's persons, family members, and property. Scarcity refers to the fact that there is not enough for everyone to survive

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.27 of 76

and provide for their families. (This is especially the case because Locke assumes the legitimacy of the ownership of private property in land, the main means of production, the main resource for supporting one’s family, in his time.) Scarcity is aggravated by the fact that there is no refrigeration, which means that the scarce fruits of the earth must be picked and consumed in a timely manner to avoid losing the benefits of enjoying them. Moreover, Locke argued that everyone has a God-given right to life, liberty, and property. The key point of difference between Hobbes and Locke lies in the fact that Locke argues that the power of the government is limited by the fact that it has a fiduciary responsibility towards the citizens. Locke's social contract is a vision of **limited government: The government may rule only to the extent that it does not violate its relationship of trust with the people and its commitment to protect the life, liberty, and property of the people – and the government certainly must not itself infringe upon such rights.** Another key element of Locke’s theory is the

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.28 of 76

fact that it is a **two-stage social contract**. First there is the agreement made among men to live together peacefully in civil society (because men have learned the Christian lesson to love their neighbors as themselves). Then, there is the agreement or contract to establish the form of government and name the leaders. This version of the theory is congenial to the proposition of legitimate revolutionary change. Why? Because even if the form of government is changed, the basic social contract that formed civil society at the outset remains intact. By contrast, Hobbes postulates only a single contract; and if one rebels against the king, one thereby immediately places himself back into a state of war with everyone else in society. Now you can see why America’s colonial leaders invoked the philosophy of John Locke in the “Declaration of Independence”. (The Americans changed the right to “life, liberty, and property” to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”, although private property certainly continued to play an important role in American political theory, including in the definition of slaves as “chattel”

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.29 of 76

– “movable property”, as opposed to real estate, which is immovable property (*immobilier*, in French, means real estate)). The irony in Locke’s theory, however, is that the right to revolution is conditional. A revolution is legitimate only if it is successful. If it is not, one must conclude that there was not enough of a consensus that the government had failed to fulfill its duties to legitimate a violent rebellion.

Video Part 5

C. Jean-Jacques Rousseau

This brings us to the third version of modern Western social contract theory, that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau was born in Geneva, Switzerland, but is associated with France, because he first rose to fame there and helped to inspire the French Revolution of 1789. The context was French monarchical absolutism under King Louis XIV (1638-1715) and his successors. After all, it was Louis XIV who famously said, “L’État c’est moi!” – I am the State!

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.30 of 76

As in the English case, France was undergoing significant socio-economic change that was reflected in the realm of political philosophy. In part because of policies adopted by Louis XIV himself, the independence of the nobility was curbed, as the army was modernized in a manner that deprived the nobility of its monopoly over senior positions and ranks. He modernized the legal system, systematizing it in 1667. His administration encouraged the growth of manufacture and industry, although this did not proceed in France as rapidly as it did in England. Nevertheless, the industrialization that did occur helped to promote the rise of the Third Estate (those who were not of the 1st estate -- the clergy-- or the 2nd estate --the nobility). After the storming of the infamous Bastille prison, 576 out of the 577 members of the Third Estate who were locked out of a meeting of the Estates-General on 20 June 1789 signed an oath at the Jeu de Paume (tennis court) in Versailles. In that oath, they swore that they would continue to meet “until the constitution of the kingdom” – which Louis XVI

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.31 of 76

had prohibited -- was adopted. Eventually, their solidarity (and their consciousness of themselves as a class) forced Louis XVI to order the 1st and 2nd Estates to join the 3rd Estate in the National Assembly.

It is easy to see why Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* is viewed as the inspiration for the French Revolution and as the assertion of the will of this burgeoning middle class. (The bourgeoisie is called the middle class because it – composed of artisans and merchants -- was neither the aristocracy, which had status because of inherited wealth, nor the peasantry, mainly serfs, who had no status because of the lack of wealth. The bourgeoisie created its own wealth.) The groundwork for Rousseau's *Social Contract* was laid by his two discourses, which won awards from the Academy of Dijon (yes, the same Dijon known for its Dijon mustard!).

1. Rousseau's First Discourse, written by “A Citizen of Geneva”, was regarding the question, “Has the restoration of the sciences and arts tended to purify morals?” Ironically, although he is associated with

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The "Political", Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.32 of 76

Enlightenment, Rousseau presents here an attack on the Enlightenment itself. He argues that "our souls have been corrupted in proportion to the advancement of our sciences and arts toward perfection." He claims that all societies -- from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome" to China -- have been corrupted by the spread of knowledge. It is rare, in short, to find one who is both knowledgeable and moral. In fact, our knowledge depends on "our vices", and the sciences are inherently dangerous: The likelihood of error, and so-called great philosophical writers, "serve only to destroy faith and virtue".⁴ Luxury corrupts us and our tastes. This lesson is evident in the series of historical defeats of wealthy, enlightened nations by poorer, warlike peoples (like German tribes of Rome). Finally, "*the spread of the arts destroys*" ". . . *the military virtues needed by any political community for its self-defense*" and "*produces rewards based on appearances rather than recompenses for*

⁴ Roger D. Masters, "Introduction," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses* (New York: St. Martin's Press), p. 9.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.33 of 76

actions. As a result, inequality among men develops on an artificial basis, unrelated to true virtue.”⁵

Before art had moulded our manners and taught our passions to speak an affected language, our customs were rustic but natural, and differences of conduct announced at first glance those of character. Human nature, basically, was no better, but men found their security in the ease of seeing through each other, and that advantage, which we no longer appreciate, spared them many vices.

Today, when subtler researches and a more refined taste have reduced the art of pleasing to set rules, a base and deceptive uniformity prevails in our customs, and all minds seem to have been cast in the same mould. One no longer dares to appear as he is; and in this perpetual constraint, the men who form this herd

⁵ Ibid.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.34 of 76

called society, placed in the same circumstances, will all do the same things unless stronger motives deter them. Therefore one will never know well those with whom he deals.... What a procession of vices must accompany this uncertainty! No more sincere friendships; no more real esteem; no more well-based confidence. Suspicions, offenses, fears, coldness, reserve, hate, betrayal will hide constantly under that uniform and false veil of politeness, under that much vaunted urbanity which we owe to the enlightenment of our century.”⁶

2. Rousseau’s Second Discourse: In the Second Discourse regarding the origins of inequality, Rousseau explores this argument further. He begins with the view of man in nature as the noble savage. His point of departure, then, is closer to that of Locke than to that of Hobbes,

⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “First Discourse,” in Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*,” pp. 37-38.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.35 of 76

for whom man is naturally evil. Here Rousseau explores in greater detail the progressive development of the division of labor, first between men and women, and then among individuals engaged in the task of providing for themselves. Man originally enjoyed *“the life of an animal limited at first to pursuing sensations and scarcely profiting from the gifts nature offered him, far from dreaming of wresting anything from it. But difficulties soon arose; it was necessary to learn to conquer them.”* As he sought to overcome these difficulties, he devised and used various tools, including other men. In other words, instrumental rationality – means-end rationality --- entered into human relationships. The most catastrophic development came with the development of private property. Rousseau wrote the following, at the beginning of Part II of his Second Discourse, regarding the origin of inequality among men:

The first person who, after fencing off a plot of land, took it into his head to say this is mine and found people [stupid] enough to

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.36 of 76

believe him, was the true founder of civil society. What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human race have been spared by someone who, uprooting the stakes or filling in the ditch, had shouted to his fellow men: Beware of listening to this impostor; you are lost if you forget that the fruits belong to all and the earth to no one! But it is very likely that by then things had already come to the point where they could no longer remain as they were. For this idea of property, depending on many prior ideas which could only have arisen successively, was not conceived all at once in the human mind. It was necessary to make much progress, to acquire much industry and enlightenment, and to transmit and augment them from age to age, before arriving at this last stage of the state of nature.

Now, listen very carefully to this next section of Rousseau's Second Discourse. Later this quarter, you will find that some

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.37 of 76

surprisingly similar ideas were articulated by Zhuangzi, the ancient Chinese Daoist philosopher. (Zhuangzi, however, did not share Rousseau’s typically Enlightenment views about the antagonistic relationship between man and nature.)

.... [Man] learned to surmount nature’s obstacles, combat other animals when necessary, fight for his subsistence even with men, or make up for what had to be yielded to the stronger.

... This repeated utilization of various beings in relation to himself, and of some beings in relation to others, must naturally have engendered in man’s mind perceptions of certain relations. Those relationships that we express by the words large, small, strong, weak, fast, slow, fearful, bold, and other similar ideas, compared when necessary and almost without thinking about it, finally produced in him some sort of reflection, or rather a

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.38 of 76

*mechanical prudence that indicated to him the precautions most necessary for his safety.*⁷

Rousseau is describing here two very important developments: (1) the manner in which men began to make invidious distinctions among one another; and (2) the development of a division of labor, in which people took advantage of their various natural strengths to focus on what they did best and exchanged the products of that activity that he did not need with others who had different strengths. I could have, for example, made a pact with a very tall individual to pick apples that I could not reach and in return bake a nice apple pie for him. As this **division of labor** progressed, those most generously endowed were able to accumulate more, and the rich learned how to exploit the poor ever more efficiently.⁸ At first, man

⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. by Roger D. and Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), pp. 141-143.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.39 of 76

once lived a simple solitary life, as a “noble savage”, to borrow Rousseau’s term, but once he is in society, he is miserable. He is alienated from his fellows, whom he sees and treats as means to ends (there is that instrumental rationality that I just mentioned).

Now, as pitiful as this human condition is, Rousseau does not see any way out of it. Thus, the *Social Contract* represents the best we can do with what we have. Since man has lost his natural morality through the progressive development of the division of labor (D^L), an artificial morality -- an “artificial religion”, as he put it, a noble lie, as we put it in this course - - must be established through the creation of the social contract. Note that I am using the term “noble lie” in this course only to refer to an ideology – a philosophy that is most likely “false” but operates to support a certain political system. We will come back to this point later.

3. The *Social Contract*

Now, as we turn to Rousseau’s version of the social contract, I would

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.40 of 76

like to review what we have found so far in the social contract theory of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Remember, we are asking the same three questions of each philosopher or school of thought in order to identify the **noble lie** (which we may also call a **Socratic lie** or **Socratic myth** or **legitimizing myth**) deployed by that theorist to legitimate his ideal polity and its leadership:

- a. What is the nature of man? Is man fundamentally good or evil?*
- b. What is the human condition now?*
- c. What is the solution in the political realm?*

We have seen that Hobbes, in defense of monarchical absolutism, argued that man is fundamentally evil. The human condition at the time was that England was involved in a civil war in which supporters of absolute monarchy sought to defend it against the “parliamentarians”, who were – in the name of the rising bourgeoisie -- demanding that they have a role in making laws regarding taxation (you certainly recall the slogan, “No

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.41 of 76

taxation without representation,” from the Boston Tea Party, right?).

Hobbes defended the absolute monarchy by positing a hypothetical “state of nature” in which there is no authority to keep everyone “in awe”. His conclusion was that reasonable men could only have elected to give up some of their rights to defend themselves in order to enjoy the blessings of being able to live in peace with their fellows. The solution to the problem, in other words, was precisely the absolute monarchy.

By contrast, we saw that John Locke, inspired in large part by his Christian faith, believed that man is fundamentally good. How do we explain bad behavior, then? The answer is bad circumstances, specifically, spoilage and scarcity. Rousseau’s account is much more complex. We know that he believes that by nature, man is a noble savage, so he is fundamentally good when he is living on his own. The problem arises once he starts to interact with other men in society. In such interactions, men compare themselves to each other and start to use one another for their

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.42 of 76

own ends as they work out an increasingly complex division of labor. The situation is what it is, however – we cannot turn back the clock. My point here is that Rousseau’s *social contract* is merely the best we can do given our reality – it is not, and can never be, as good as the human condition was at the beginning of the state of nature.

Thus, it is significant that Rousseau begins his book on *The Social Contract* with the following observation:

*“Man is born free, and he is everywhere in chains.”*⁹

Nevertheless, Rousseau's effort to approximate the original state of nature is decidedly ambiguous in its implications for democracy and dictatorship. It inspired the French revolution because of its democratic implications. It asserts the basic moral equality of all; it opposes the notion that monarchs are divinely endowed with the right to rule; only the people have that right; and only the people are sovereign.

⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. with an Introduction by Maurice Cranston (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 49.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.43 of 76

I cannot emphasize strongly enough the revolutionary implications of this language in Rousseau's *Social Contract*. This is why political theory is so important. It is not just theory! Rousseau established the notion of popular sovereignty, and it was this notion that helped to inspire the French Revolution. Because of that notion, for the first time in history, the French people (*le peuple*) constituted themselves as France. Before the French Revolution, all public decisions, all decisions regarding the public welfare, including decisions to send men to die and be maimed in war, were the private business of the monarch. After the French Revolution, the people claimed to be France. Prior to the French Revolution, it was inconceivable that the King could be denounced as a traitor. After 1789, the King could now be accused of treason, on the basis of the belief, the fear (*La Grande Peur*, the Great Fear that spread throughout France), that the King was plotting against France in collusion with the relatives of his Austro-

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.44 of 76

Hungarian wife Marie Antoinette, against the French people, who now claimed that they were France.

However, this was not a theory that advocated mindless chaos. Rousseau argued that since all sovereignty arose from the people, obeying the law constituted merely obeying oneself.¹⁰ This theory thus establishes a basis for a new order, not disorder. This theory also seems to establish limits on the Sovereign, the Law Giver: *“The Sovereign, having no force other than the legislative power, acts only by means of the laws; and the laws being solely the authentic acts of the general will, the Sovereign cannot act save when the people is assembled.”*¹¹ In fact, Rousseau argues that “every law the people have not ratified in person is null and void” — any such law is, in fact, not a law.¹² The legislative power belongs to the people, and can belong to it alone. This establishes limits on representation, and makes it very clear that,

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 101.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 136.

¹² Ibid., p. 141.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.45 of 76

in fact, Rousseau, “A Citizen of Geneva”, intended his social contract to apply to a very small body politic.

Thus, there are significant ambiguities in Rousseau’s *Social Contract*:

1. The first lies in the notion of the general will, which is the public’s desire to do what is in the best interest of the public as a whole. It is not the will of all, which is just the sum of individual wills. Rousseau writes:

By themselves the people always will what is good, but by themselves do not always discern it. The general will is always rightful, but the judgment which guides it is not always enlightened. It must be made to see things as they are, and sometimes as they should be seen; it must be shown the good path which it is seeking, and secured against seduction by the desires of individuals.... Individuals see the good and reject it; the public desires the good but does not see it. Both equally need guidance. Individuals must be obliged to subordinate their will to their reason; the public must be taught to recognize what it desires. . . . Hence the necessity of a lawgiver.” The public does not always know what the general

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.46 of 76

will is and must be constrained to obey it.¹³ Therefore, *“whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body, which means nothing other than that he shall be forced to be free.”*¹⁴

2. This argument is based on the view that the individual man pursuing his private interests in civil society (*homme*) has a particular will that is different from “the general will that he has as a citizen (*citoyen*).”¹⁵

Video Part 6

VI. Max Weber’s typology of 3 principles of legitimation, or 3 kinds (or bases) of legitimate authority.

We are now in an even more modern era. Max Weber, the German sociologist (1864-1920), offered a typology of 3 kinds of authority or domination. (These are 3 bases on which legitimacy is accorded). These are

¹³ Ibid., p. 83

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.47 of 76

pure types (that is to say, they almost always exist in combination with one another).

1) Traditional authority is characterized by belief in the legitimacy of an authority that has “always existed” .

- Rulers typically develop a myth of natural superiority. In this type of authority, rulers are masters because of their inherited status, and the commands generally accord with customary practices.
- The apparatus used for the exercise of traditional authority consists of personal retainers (relatives or personally loyal allies), like feudal vassals, tributary lords.
- This is more typical of traditional societies, especially pre-industrial age societies, including tribal societies, such as American Indian tribes.

2) Rational-Legal Authority is characterized by the existence of a system of rules developed and applied in accordance with rationally

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.48 of 76

ascertainable principles that are valid for and applicable to all members of the corporate group (the body politic). This is more characteristic of modern industrial, especially capitalist societies, in which the power of reason is valued, and efforts are made to rationalize various aspects of life. When I talk about rationalization, I am referring to the application of means-end rationality, in which one applies appropriate methods to reach a certain objective. Thus, in the United States, for example, we have a set of rules that are intended to ensure that appropriate individuals can be elected to office. We have a system of primaries, we have minimum age limits for our officials, and we have rules regarding the franchise, who has the right to vote and how that right is exercised.

3) **Charismatic authority** exists where command is exercised by one individual who is believed to have (and can prove that he has) *charisma* (the gift of divine grace) by virtue of special powers,

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.49 of 76

revelations, heroism, or other another unique gift. The root of the word *charisma* is the Greek word *charism* (χαρισμ), which means gift, as in a “gift from God”. To cite an example of this, I can offer Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, who had a gift for speech and persuasion. He was not a particularly imposing figure or singularly attractive, but people who saw him speak in person described how sparks flew from his eyes as he spoke. Whether a person has charisma or not is, of course, a subjective judgment. Ronald Reagan is reputed to have had charisma, but many did not see that. Some individuals who are charismatic can become the object of a cult-like hero worship, such as Adolf Hitler or even Donald Trump.

Note that all three of these pure types of legitimate authority can and do coexist in virtually every political system. Consider the following examples:

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.50 of 76

- The British Monarchy: a combination of traditional authority because of the existence of a hereditary monarchy; rational-legal authority because of the existence of a parliamentary system; and charismatic authority because of the a) the tendency for the royal family to be viewed as having charisma; and b) the role that charisma plays in electoral politics.
- The American political system: a combination of primarily rational-legal authority because of the electoral system; with a dash of charismatic authority, because of the role of charisma in electoral politics – the election of John F. Kennedy over Richard Nixon in 1960 in large part because of his success in the famous first televised presidential debate that year; plus a bit of traditional authority, when we consider the role of “political dynasties” in American politics. Such dynasties include the Kennedy family and the Bush family.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.51 of 76

Video Part 7

VII. The example of the Japanese *Kokutai* 国体 myth – the Family

Conception of the State 家族国家 in Meiji Japan (1868-1912)

Now, to tie all the various points in this discussion about political legitimacy together, I would like to illustrate a concrete example in modern times of a Socratic myth. Briefly, in Meiji Japan, after the overthrow of the Tokugawa and the establishment of a new regime in the Meiji Restoration, the new leaders found it necessary to elaborate a legitimating myth to support their new polity. The resulting myth or ideology of the *kokutai*—the family conception of the state (*minzoku-kokka*)—was tied to the notion of the divinity of the emperor. It exploited traditional Japanese familial ties as well as the traditional Confucian belief system in which filial piety was the supreme virtue. All Japanese were said to form a single great ethnic and moral family unit, of which the emperor was the head. The new noble lie permitted old loyalties and patterns of obedience within the individual

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.52 of 76

Japanese family to be transferred to loyalties and patterns of obedience to the Japanese nation-state. In this case, ethnic unity was especially important—there was no distinction between the nation as a geographical and ethnic unit and the state as a political entity. The Japanese body politic (*kokutai*) was, finally, said to be unique in its nature, and this alleged uniqueness forged the fiercest nationalism, the nationalism and devotion to the head of this unique family polity, the emperor, that animated the suicide (*kamikaze*) pilots of World War II.

The second part of Socrates’s noble lie can also be found in Meiji *kokutai* thought: The myth "gives divine sanction to the natural hierarchy of human talents and virtues while enabling the regime to combine the political advantages of this hierarchy with those of mobility. In the Socratic view, political justice requires that unequal men receive unequal honors and unequal shares in ruling. This is both advantageous and fitting. In order to be effective and be preserved, the inequality of right and duty

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.53 of 76

must receive institutional expression.”¹⁶ Here again, it would seem that Japan’s Meiji leaders took a page out of Plato’s *Republic*: The ultimate institutional expression of hierarchy was the so-called emperor system (*tennō-sei* 天皇制), in which *divinity* was attributed to the emperor, who was said to be descended from Ōmikame Amaterasu (the Sun Goddess). He was served by a massive government bureaucracy, up to 80% of which was eventually constituted by graduates of Tokyo Imperial University. The University was established in fact as a training ground for prospective government officials. The rigid examination system that remains today in Japan was established early in the Meiji period and was specifically constructed on the basis of the *kokutai* myth. Young people studied the subject at university – in the late 19th century, what would have been our Department of Political Science here at UCSD was the Department for the Study of the Kokutai at Tokyo Imperial University. There, students aspiring

¹⁶ Bloom, “Interpretive Essay”, loc. cit.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.54 of 76

to serve in the government bureaucracy studied the political philosophy of the *kokutai* and were subjected to the kind of constant testing that Plato described in his *Republic*. Those who then passed the civil service exam and demonstrated that they had learned what they had been taught at university well could be appointed to serve the emperor in the bureaucracy.

All these elements are incorporated into the following passage from a wartime Japanese textbook (I have uploaded a handout with this text to the Files Section on Canvas):

Filial piety in our country has its true characteristics in its perfect conformity without our national entity by heightening still further the relationship between reality and nature. Our country is a great family nation, and the Imperial Household is the head family of the subjects and the nucleus of national life. The subjects revere the Imperial Household, which is the head family, with the

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.55 of 76

*tender esteem (they have) for their ancestors. And the Emperor
loves his subjects as his very own [children].”*

This *kokutai* myth fulfills all the functions of Socrates’s noble myth in
affording a basis for political legitimacy:

- 1) The myth gets the rulers to accept their roles as leaders and
make the public interest their own interest.
- 2) The myth gets the citizens to accept the idea that the ruler deserves
to rule and to trust that he will rule in their interests.
- 3) The lie makes public commands accord with private morality by
drawing on previously existing private morality.
- 4) The myth permits the citizens to accept the authority of the
government without question.
- 5) The lie causes the citizens to suffer the “automatic penalty of psychic
conflict”. These components were assembled not only from imported
modern western thought (German theory of the state)—but also

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.56 of 76

from Chinese Confucian thought and indigenous Japanese religious and philosophical ideas that predated the importation of Chinese thought.

I would like to draw a few items to your attention:

1) First of all, like the “noble lie” we find in Plato’s *Republic*, the *Kokutai* myth is a myth that legitimates an **organic polity**. The organic state exists prior to the people who become part of it. In other words, the people are born into the polity. You are a member of the Japanese *kokutai* because you are Japanese. There is no opting out of this state. What are you going to do, stop being Japanese?

2) It is also worth noting that the *Kokutai* myth incorporates all 3 Weberian bases of legitimate authority:

a) There is **traditional authority**, in the fact that the emperor system is a hereditary monarchy.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.57 of 76

- b) There is **legal-rational authority** because, according to the myth, there is a constitution, which was a gift given by the Meiji Emperor to his people.
- c) There is also **charismatic authority** because the emperor is said to be divine, because he was descended from the Sun Goddess. Of course, this myth is even more cogent, more persuasive to its intended audience (the Japanese people) because it posits that the Imperial Household is the head family, and thus it implies that all the Japanese people are also divine. That makes this myth very attractive to ordinary Japanese. Moreover, if we conceptualize the *kokutai* as a pyramid, with the emperor (*Mikado* 帝) at the top and ordinary Japanese at the bottom, this myth also implies that the closer you are to the emperor the more divine you are. Conversely, the further away from the emperor you are, say, as a Chinese

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

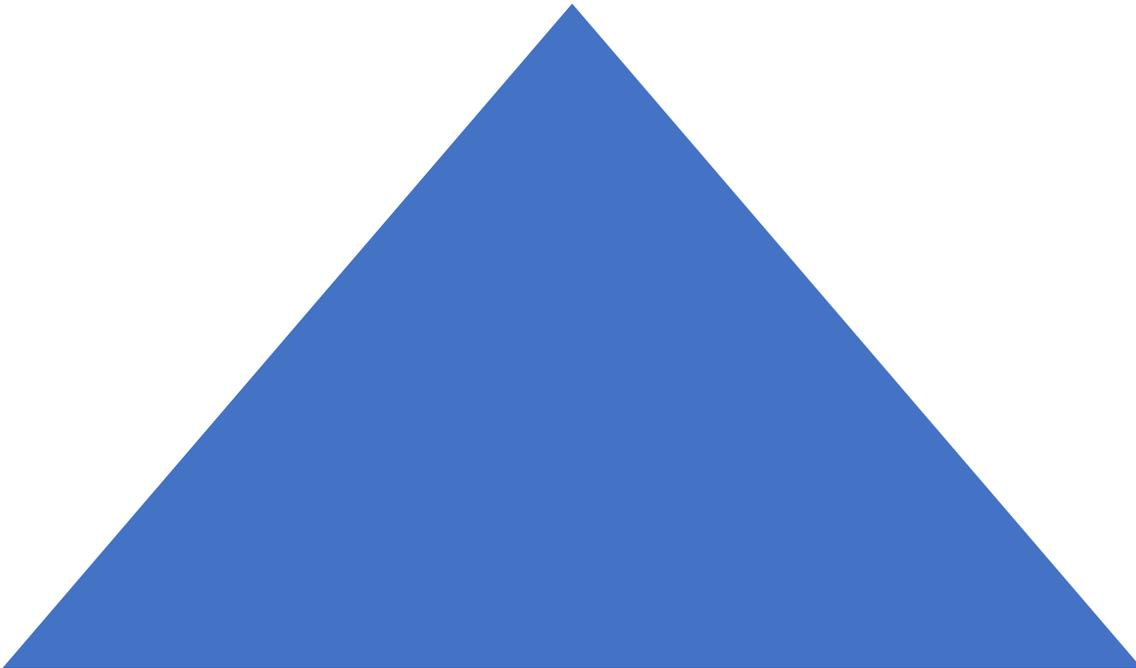
I.58 of 76

or Korean person who was not a member of the family, the less your personal worth is. I make this point regarding the position of a Chinese or Korean person because this *kokutai* perspective served to legitimate the inferior position of subjugation to Japanese rule accorded to China, Korea, and other countries in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere during World War II. It also helps to explain the wartime atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers in the Rape of Nanjing in China, for example. These soldiers, educated in the *kokutai* perspective, regarded the victims of their atrocities as subhuman. In Japan today, Chinese and Korean residents continue to be treated as second-class citizens, reflecting the lingering impact of these attitudes.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.59 of 76

Emperor (*Mikado* 帝)



Ordinary Japanese people (*Nihonjin* 日本人)

d) Now do you see what I mean when I say that this was an ingenious Socratic Lie? If one element of this myth became weakened, one could still count the other two feet of the tripod, so to speak, to support the claims of legitimation made in the myth.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.60 of 76

Video Part 8

VIII. The Problem of the Legitimacy of the Notion of *Legitimacy*

I have a question for you. Do you accept the notion of political legitimacy as legitimate? In other words, do you believe that the notion of *political legitimacy* is legitimate? The notion of legitimacy, which we have argued is a problem to be resolved by all regimes, has been called into question from a number of different perspectives. How?

There are 2 major critiques of the idea of political legitimacy. They have been made by two groups:

- 1.) Anarchists and
- 2.) Marxists

Both groups of thinkers challenge the notion that there is an underlying *consensus* (political consensus) (which, even if it is only tacit, can be construed to support -- or give “legitimacy” to -- the existing regime).

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.61 of 76

These critics make an important and valid point: The notion of legitimacy has an inherently conservative bias. As long as a government stays in power, even if by being able to quash, via subtle or not so subtle political repression, all possible dissent or challenge to its authority, it is assumed to have legitimacy.

Another point that both groups of critics make is that such a consensus that supposedly accords legitimacy to the government undergirds bourgeois (i.e., capitalist, so-called representative democratic) political systems, in particular, although anarchists and Marxists base their arguments on different premises.

1) Anarchists:

Anarchists reject all governmental, and even non-governmental political authority. For in their view, all such authority is ultimately based on force! Therefore...

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.62 of 76

The notion of *legitimacy* itself is only a pervasive myth designed to get citizens/subjects to knuckle under without protest. For anarchists, the public and private spheres cannot be reconciled **as long as “public” means “government” or “state” and not just “free association” among individuals in a society.** Indeed, some anarchists have gone a step further to reject politics as a whole. For the conventional definition of politics revolves around the exercise of power to influence who gets what, where, and how as defined by Harold Lasswell.

2) And then we have the **Marxists**, who, by the way, are not synonymous with "Communists" with a capital "C". “Communism” refers to the statist variety of Communism – State Communism -- that existed in Russia and Eastern Europe until 1989 and which still exists today in China. It is the opposite of the small-“c” communism that Marx advocated: a society that would have no classes and therefore no state at all. What, then, is the Marxist critique?

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.63 of 76

Marxists have made a slightly different argument, one that is based on their view of the peculiar nature of *bourgeois* society, which is specifically characterized by the prevalence and sanctity of private property (in the means of production). Two thousand years before Marx's time, Plato talked of the need to reconcile the public and the private spheres with regard to the issue of property. In Plato's city-state, private property (or rather, private possession or use of resources recognized as belonging to the community) played a significant role. Plato recognized that as long as the ruler/guardian has private property of his own, he has his own private interests apart from the public/common interest of the city-state as a whole. (Compare what we refer to today in the U.S. as a "conflict of interest" between anyone in a public position, such as a congressman or cabinet official who holds property in areas that touch on their spheres of influence. For example, there is a current debate over whether members of Congress should be prohibited from holding shares of individual stocks.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.64 of 76

Why? Because Congressmen, who conduct inquiries on various matters that give them access to confidential information regarding the economy that is not available to the general public, and they might be tempted to use that information in their trading, in order to promote their own private financial interests. Thus, (in his *Republic* § 416d) Plato offered a solution to this problem: “[I]n addition to this education [in relevant virtues], they [the rulers] must be provided with houses and other property such as not to prevent them from being the best possible guardians and not to rouse them up to do harm to the other citizens.” Thus, Plato concluded that:

1) The rulers should have no 'private property except for what is entirely necessary"

2) No house or storeroom so private that the public cannot enter it (so, no privacy at all for public officials), and they must be provided only income, a sustenance that is sufficient to maintain for “moderate men”.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.65 of 76

Now, in the bourgeois society of the Reformation and Renaissance era—when Hobbes, but more especially Locke and Rousseau wrote -- private property had taken on a heightened significance, and had acquired what some would come to see as a more insidious influence. The writings of Karl Marx were devoted to the analysis and critique of capitalist economics and its reflection in the workings of bourgeois society, including its politics. I should note that Marx’s attitude towards capitalism was not exclusively negative: He praised capitalism, for example, for the manner in which it promoted the development of technology, promising to make it possible to have a classless communist society in which everyone could have plenty to support themselves and their families. You may not be aware of the fact that Jean-Jacques Rousseau also laid the groundwork for Marx’s critique of the social contract. You remember how Rousseau opens the *Social Contract*, “Man is born free, and yet he

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.66 of 76

is everywhere in chains.” You will also recall that Rousseau considered the establishment of private property the catastrophic last stage of the state of nature. Thus, building on Rousseau, Marx argued that as long as private property exists, the separation of private man (*homme*) from the public man, the citizen (*citoyen* in Rousseau’s words) will continue to exist.

Following this logic, Marx argued that in bourgeois society, any talk of legitimacy masks this essential schism in man’s nature. Any talk of an “underlying consensus” undergirding the political system merely masks this schism as it is represented in society at large, in class conflicts (conflicts between economic classes) between those who have private property (in the means of production) and those who do not.

For those who have no private property, obviously their interest is not the public interest if the public sphere of government seeks to protect

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.67 of 76

those who do have property. So any notion of legitimacy here—in Locke’s and Rousseau’s contract theory, for example -- used to meld the public with the private spheres is a lie devised and utilized to mask an unsolvable conflict. It is the "noble" or Socratic lie of bourgeois society, according to Marx. He wrote:

Where the political state has attained to its full development, man leads, not only in thought, in consciousness, but in reality, in life, a double existence—celestial and terrestrial. He lives in the political community, where he regard himself as a communal being, and in civil society where he acts simply as a private individual, treats other men as means, degrades himself to the role of mere means, and becomes the plaything of alien power. . . . Man, in his most intimate reality, in civil society, is a profane being. Here, where he appears both to himself and others as a real individual, he is an illusory

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.68 of 76

phenomenon. In the state, on the contrary, where he is regarded as a species-being, man is the imaginary member of an imaginary sovereignty, divested of his real, individual life, and infused with an unreal universality.

The conflict in which the individual, as the professor of a particular religion, finds himself involved with his own quality of citizenship and with other men as members of the community, can be resolved into the secular schism between the political state and civil society. For man as a bourgeois “life in the state is only an appearance or a fleeting exception to the normal and essential.”¹⁷

This last point refers to the fact that in reality, in our capitalist system, we spend most of time pursuing our private interests as individuals and only when we go to the polls to vote, for example, do we really consciously

¹⁷ Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1978), p. 34.

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.69 of 76

focus on our role as public men and women (citizens). The schism remains. As April 15 approaches, when we prepare to pay our income taxes, we become keenly aware of this schism. As a citizen, how much income tax do you want to pay? As much as necessary to provide for the common defense and other essential functions of the government. As a private individual, however, how much tax do you want to pay? As little as possible!

Moreover, Rousseau had pointed out in the *Second Discourse* that the state had been established to protect those with property. The rich—those who owned property—had duped the rest into believing that they should enter into civil society, and the state really exists to allow those who have property to protect what they already have.

Now, neither Rousseau nor Marx ever suggested that the institution of private property should never have arisen—on the contrary, they agreed that it was absolutely essential for human progress. They did

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.70 of 76

observe, however, that it had had its negative repercussions for humankind, exacerbating natural inequalities and alienating men and women from each other and, indeed, from themselves. From this point of view, any notion of political legitimacy derived from social contract theory melding the public with the private sphere is a noble lie, a Socratic myth – ideology, as Marx called it, meaning “false consciousness” -- used to conceal an unresolvable conflict.

Now, what does all of this have to do with Chinese and Japanese political thought? In fact, we will find that just as in Western thought from antiquity to modern times, the notion of political *legitimacy* is a central theme. As we examine Eastern political thought, we ourselves can find the notion of notion of legitimacy useful if we consider 2 points:

- 1) We can think of “legitimacy” as a notion that refers more to a response than to an attribute of government. When we say that a regime “has legitimacy”, what we mean is not to describe the nature

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.71 of 76

of the regime itself but rather to describe the attitudes of citizens--or rather, what our Chinese and Japanese philosophers believe the attitudes of the ruled ought to be. This recognition enables us to incorporate an element of change into the concept of political legitimacy and thus avoid a static, conservative bias.

- 2) As indicated by the reference to revolution that Marx and Rousseau made explicit —the notion of political legitimacy can cut 2 ways. It can be used to mobilize support for undermining an existing regime. Seeking to justify the outcome of England’s Glorious Revolution against royal absolutism, John Locke wrote the following (*Second Treatise on Government*, §222-228):

The reason why men enter in society is the preservation of their property; and the end why they choose and authorize a legislative is that there may be laws made, and rules set, as guards and fences to the properties of all the members of the

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.72 of 76

society to limit the power and moderate the dominion of every part and member of the society. For since it can never be supposed to be the will of the society that the legislative should have a power to destroy that which everyone designs secure by entering into society, and for which the people submitted themselves to legislators of their own making, whenever the legislators endeavor to take away and destroy the property of the people, or to reduce them to slavery under arbitrary power, they put themselves into a state of war with the people, who are thereupon absolved from any further obedience, and are left to the common refuge which God hath provided for all men against force and violence.

Should the legislator empowered, then, by the political consensus that legitimates the government, violate the trust of those whose consent endowed it with political power, the latter have the

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.73 of 76

legitimate right to rebel, to make revolution against it. Interestingly enough, this right to revolution is not unconditional, for Locke: rebellion is not legitimate if it fails, for that proves that the government did not sufficiently violate its trust to mobilize the opposition necessary to overthrow it.

Now it has been the conventional wisdom in the West, that societies like China and Japan lack the kind of democratic impulse that we find in Western social contract theory. However, that is not the case. Interestingly enough, we will find a similar idea as well in Confucius and Mencius in the notion of *geming* 革命 —literally, changing the Mandate of Heaven. Moreover, interestingly, it is also conditional. I look forward to exploring this aspect of Confucian thought with you.

IX. *Ideology* versus Political Thought

I have referred to some of the ideas of Karl Marx. Marx has been condemned in the United States since the beginning of the Cold War (in

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.74 of 76

1917 right after the Russian Revolution) as the inspiration for the “ideology “of Communism. And no doubt some of you are wondering what exactly **the difference between ideology and philosophy is**. Actually, for that matter, since we will also be discussing Buddhism -- which, like Islam and Christianity, can be and has been invoked to serve political ends -- we might ask what is the difference between philosophy and religion?

When philosophy or philosophico-religious ideas – ideas that have philosophical and religious components -- are mobilized to serve political ends, when they are associated with an action program, then they come under the rubric of “ideology”. Political scientists define ideology as “a set of political ideas that are overt, systematic, doctrinal, and embodied in a set of institutions.” An ideology is comprised of a doctrine and a political action program. Such an action program can serve a revolutionary vanguard’s efforts to deny legitimacy to--mobilize support against--an

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.75 of 76

existing regime (as in the Russian and Chinese revolutions); and it can also be used to establish a new post-revolutionary regime’s legitimacy. John Locke’s social contract theory, for example, was used to legitimize . . . what? The outcome of the English Civil Wars as ratified in the Glorious Revolution and, in slightly modified language, in our Declaration of Independence.

However, the notion of “ideology” has negative connotations in most contemporary discourse. In the U.S., one does not want to be characterized as an “ideological” politician. Similarly, in Marxism, the notion of ideology is defined as “false consciousness” – sort of like the notion of the Socratic Lie, but with a stronger presumption that deliberate deception is involved. To avoid these sorts of negative connotations, we will use the words *philosophy*, *theory*, and *thought* to refer to the ideas of the thinkers that we are studying, and we will use the terms “Socratic Lie”, “Socratic Myth”, and “Legitimizing Myth” to refer to how these ideas are

POLI 113BR Chinese and Japanese Political Thought (I)
Week 1: Course Introduction: What Is Political Philosophy? The Notion
Of The “Political”, Legitimacy, and Comparative Political Thought

I.76 of 76

used to legitimate a regime. We will not be talking in terms of “Confucian ideology”, or “Daoist ideology”, which implies that these ideas are false and/or misleading, and must avoid using the term “ideology” this way in your discussion assignments and papers.

X. CONCLUSIONS

Now that you have heard these introductory comments regarding this central notion of legitimacy, I would like for you to consider two questions in preparation for our next class meeting:

A. From the readings that you will have completed, how is the notion of political legitimacy reflected in Chinese thought?

B. Are there any other concepts or ideas that you see in their thought that you think we ought to try to track over the rest of the quarter?

I invite you to start a new thread in the Discussion section of Canvas to submit your ideas between now and our next class.