

The Origins of Political Order Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Origins of Political Order* emphasizes how the historical development of political systems worldwide can be traced back to the natural inclination of humans to favor blood relationships.

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Favorite quote from the author:



Human nature is a curious thing. We all have different aspirations, principles, various perspectives on life, yet we're all programmed the same. The mystery of our nature lies within both our discrepancies and similarities. Differences allow us to compete with each other, while our resemblances keep us united.

Throughout history, societies developed under the principles of unity, likeness, and kinship. Or in other words, around the concept of family. This notion set the base of our current order and played an enormous role in the development of the world, as outlined in *The Origins of Political Order*.

From early stages to modern times, Francis Fukuyama covers essential aspects regarding the evolution of states and the mechanisms behind them from a sociopolitical point of view. The distinguishing element of this book is how the author emphasizes the contextual development of societies and why they turned out to be so different.

By giving eloquent historical examples, the author highlights not just facts, but also life lessons. Here are my three favorite ones:

1. We are naturally prone to share more with our closest relatives, in descending order.

2. States are ever-changing social structures that need to adapt constantly, and if they fail to do so they will inevitably decay.
3. The lasting sociopolitical structures are the ones that balance the state-people relationship.

Now, let's dig a little deeper into these lessons!

Lesson 1: Humans are naturally inclined to favor their families over anything else.

Humans are social creatures. From the beginning of time, people have been looking for ways to cooperate and live with each other. That will never change. We thrive in social cooperation, and that is how the complex social layers of today came to life.

However, the way we interact with each other is subject to a very interesting principle, and that is the inclination to choose blood ties over other individuals. Even inside our family circle, we tend to help close members more than distant relatives.

The feeling of belongingness and kinship rules over rationality. For this purpose, humans formed strong social structures such as communities, tribes, or states. These complex formations became almost unbreakable, and as rulers tried to fight them, they would sooner or later fail in their endeavors.

Alongside favoring family, people also tend to prefer those who have been nice to them previously over new and unknown individuals. In other words, humans value family and friends, and they're bound to these relationships by instinct.

As these relationships became more complex and defined, politics were born, and with them, governance, law, and accountability as well.

Lesson 2: States that seek long-term survival must always adapt to the people and the political environment.

Throughout time, societal layers and roles developed. In tribes, there was no ruler, but families and third parties solved disputes about property ownership or justice matters.

As tribes grow, conflicts appear, and a more centralized authority becomes imperative for maintaining order. For example, there were 23 states in China by 770 BC. And so the two main parties, Confucianism (kin-based) and Legalism (merit-based), initiated a fight over authority and power.

Although Legalism initially won, it wasn't long until it collapsed and Confucianism took over. **The reason? People prefer to be ruled by laws that favor family and their natural inclination for it.**

India and the Middle East followed a similar evolution. Although Hindu emperors managed to unite parts of the subcontinent, people preferred to be close to their local ties. As such, these unions didn't last very long.

Middle Eastern dictators seemed to be one step ahead, as they hindered family connections and prevented slave-soldiers from having successors. Against all odds, the servicemen still managed to have heirs and even put them in key positions, creating confusion and weak links in the state. This ultimately led to another empire decline.

Lesson 3: The masses will always win in the long run and favoritism for the rich can only last so much.

Europe met a distinctive evolution once the Catholic religion spread and the church represented one of the greatest authorities. It valued family ties, and so it diminished the desire of people to rise against their states.

However, for some countries, a revolution was inevitable. By carrying a heavy tax burden from war debts, France and Spain had to become creative in their ways of raising money. Therefore, they started selling titles and offices, privatizing power and authority. Later on, these were passed to their children, tax-free.

However, agricultural peasant work remained very much taxable, leading to a reality we all know too well: the rich keep getting richer, while the poor keep getting poorer.

Needless to say, France's dictatorship decayed as it was more aggressive and discriminatory for the poor. In Spain, however, a law that favored family-based favoritism passed, so they managed to avoid a revolution.

England and Hungary faced similar cases. The former had a system representing all its people, while the latter didn't grant peasant protection and became weak, decentralized, and later, perfect prey for the Mongols.

Therefore, history makes it clear that unification starts with inclusion and ends with discrimination.

The Origins of Political Order Review

Francis Fukuyama takes the reader on a historical walk through the construction and evolution of the present-day states. The book highlights not only the rise and fall of notorious empires from all over the world but also the reasons behind them, most of the time linked to improper governance systems.

The Origins of Political Order will broaden your perspective on human nature in relation to the machine behind today's society. Its readers will learn about the contextual development of China, the Middle East, Europe, India, and other countries, and what made them so alike in the past, but so fundamentally different today.

Who would I recommend *The Origins of Political Order* summary to?

The curious 24-year-old who wants to dive deeper with his lectures and explore more complex topics, the retired 55-year-old who finds leisure in learning and cultivating his knowledge, and any history enthusiast who enjoys reading and wants to broaden their horizon.