

Political Philosophy I at Stockholms Universitet

Tomek Garbus

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1 Reading assignment 1: Plato - Crito

Socrates' friend, Crito, soon before his planned execution, to attempt one last time to convince Socrates to accept help from his friends in escaping the prison.

Crito cites three reasons why Socrates should accept. Firstly, he is a beloved friend who cannot be replaced. Moreover, if Socrates is executed, Crito will be disgraced in society's eyes because people will think that Crito either couldn't or didn't want to save him. Finally, Socrates' children will be left as orphans.

There begins Socrates' explanation why he refuses to escape his penalty.

Firstly, he preaches to Crito that he should not be concerned with the public opinion. Good men will know things as they are, and the others' opinion is irrelevant. He uses multiple analogies, for example that of a gymnast and their trainer. The athlete should pay attention to their coach's criticism but not to anyone else's.

Then he presents arguments against escaping:

By escaping, he would undermine the authority law and the state. He would be setting an example for other Athenians to ignore the law and the collective decisions of direct democracy.

He claims that Athenians have a moral obligation to be obedient to the state out of gratitude for what they have already received: an upbringing, education.

Socrates also brings up the fact that every free Athenian, once they come of age, is free to take their belongings and leave where they wish. Therefore, by staying in Athens, they have implicitly accepted the social contract embodied by the law.

For Socrates, there are two acceptable stances in relation to the law: either obey the commands, or convince your co-citizens that the commands are wrong. Disobedience is out of question and in his eyes it is wrong in three ways: it wrongs ones' parents, it wrongs ones' teachers and it breaks the social contract.

Finally, Socrates states that by escaping, he would confirm the verdict of the judges, who deemed him as someone who corrupts the youth, someone who destroys the laws. By accepting his sentence, he will prove them wrong and show his virtue and justice.

2 Lecture 1: Plato - political obligation

Book for the course: *Political Philosophy* by Jean Hampton.

Handouts posted on Athena after each lecture.

On the forum, try to discuss with other posters instead of just posting your own essay. Short and concise answers more appreciated.

Regular quizzes will be posted on Athena.

Key concepts and ideas listed on last page on each handout.

Exam:

- 10 multiple choice questions
- Five short explanations and definitions
- Two 500-word essay questions
- The exam will be based only on material discussed in class

Socrates was sentenced to death for corrupting the youth. He was part of the losing party during political turmoil, so it was kind of political vendetta against Socrates.

Did Socrates have an *obligation* to accept his sentence and to refuse the chance to escape?

2.1 Power and authority

Power: X has power over Y if X can compel Y to perform some action *p*.

- X's power over Y gives Y *a reason* to obey, but it does not create an *obligation*

Authority: X has authority if X occupies a social role (e.g. in virtue of their expertise) from which they can provide reasons for Y to act in certain ways.

- X's authority gives Y *a reason* to obey, but it does not create an *obligation*.

Political authority: X has political authority over Y iff the fact that X requires Y to perform some action *p* gives Y a reason to perform *p*, regardless of what *p* is, and where this reason purports to override all (or perhaps nearly all) reasons Y may have not to perform *p*.

Preemptive (or exclusionary) reasons: Commands issued by political authority provide reasons that *preempt or override* other reasons. Political authority requires surrender of judgment.

- It is the *source of the command* that creates the reason, not its content or relation to other reasons
- X's political authority over Y gives Y an overriding reason = *obligation to obey*.
- Political authority can provide preemptive reasons because it has *entitlement to rule*.

2.2 The source of political authority

Natural subordination theories

The nature of some creatures is such that they instinctively submit and take direction from other beings whose natures fit them for dominance, rule, and power.

- The *natural roles* argument for natural subordination
 - Aristotle’s natural subordination theory
 - * The natural domination of master over slave who has lower cognitive abilities
 - * The natural domination of men over women
- The consequentialist argument for natural subordination
 - Enlightened colonialism (e.g. Mill)

2.3 Divine authority theories

A ruler has legitimate political authority iff his authority comes in some way from the authority possessed by God(s) whose rule over human beings is unquestionable.

- **Ruler is (a) God**, a divine authority himself
 - Egyptian pharaohs (Tutankhamum means *living image of Amun* the Sun god)
 - Dalai Lamas (re-incarnations of Avalokitesvara, *the lord who looks down*)
- **Ruler is descended from God(s)** and has divine status due to this relationship
 - Some Roman emperors (Augustus was *Divi filius*, *Son of the Divine One*)
 - Japanese emperors (descendants of the goddess Amaterasu, the goddess of the Sun)

Divine right view

Rulers are human but have been given the authority to rule by God (indirect authorization).

- Adam was given authority to rule the Earth by God and kings are his first-in-line descendants
- Robert Filmer (1588-1653), *Patriarcha, or the Natural Power of Kings* (1680)

Metaphysics and politics

Natural subordination and divine authority theories are *metaphysical*: politics is part of the natural world.

Politics as a moral problem

- If political authority is part of the natural order of the world, politics is not a moral problem (it is a question of metaphysics).
 - There were medieval books guidelines for rulers which instructed how to be a good political leader, not from perspective of being good to your subject but to satisfy God.
- If political authority is not part of the natural order, it must be explained how and why rulers can have it, and why subjects have an obligation to obey it – politics becomes a moral problem.

The single most consequential idea of Western civilization: *Politics is conventional*

2.4 Conventional views of political obligation

Natural duty accounts

There is a general non-voluntary obligation to maintain and promote just institutions.

Do you think that a state can exist and survive in which the decisions of law have no power, where they are ignored by citizens?

- How to explain your special obligations to your own state if political obligations are general?
- How are you bound to *your* state?

Associative accounts

There are special, non-voluntary (role-) obligations towards one’s political institutions created by social roles or identities (e.g. obligation from gratitude).

since you were brought into the world and nurtured and educated by us, can you deny in the first place that you are our child and slave, as your fathers were before you= And if this is true, you are not on equal terms with us... Just as you may do no violence to your father or mother, much less may you do violence to your country.

- Why does a social role or identity create political obligations in itself?
- How could the duties associated with a social role or identity that is morally indefensible be morally binding?

Transactional accounts

There are special, non-voluntary obligations towards political institutions, based on the requirement of reciprocity: political obligations are a matter of fairness.

Not only have we ... given you and every other citizen a share in every good that we have to offer, but we have even granted you and every Athenian the right that if you do not like us when you have come of age, you may go where you please and take your goods with you. None of our laws will forbid it or interfere with you. Anyone who does not like us, the laws and the state, and who wants to go to a colony or to any other city, may go where he likes, and take his goods with him.

- Fairness is owed to fellow citizens; how do duties to fellow participants in a cooperative scheme establish obligations to the state?

Social contract theories

Political obligations arise from voluntary acts (consent) either explicitly or implicitly.

Anyone who has seen the way in which we keep justice and administer the state, and who remains here, has entered into a contract that he will do as we command him. And if he disobeys us, he wrongs us... because he made an agreement with us that he will obey our commands.

- Does “choosing to remain” constitute explicit or implicit consent?

- If consent is hypothetical, how can it create real-life obligations?

2.5 Are all political authorities entitled to rule?

Political legitimacy

Political legitimacy is *justified* entitlement to rule.

Two different views:

- **Political authority presupposes legitimacy.** Only legitimate political authority creates political obligations. That is, only *legitimate governments have political authority*. Illegitimate governments have only power.
- **Political authority and legitimacy are distinct.** Even illegitimate governments have political authority. That is, they are entitled to rule, even if their entitlements is not all-things-considered morally justified.

2.6 Are there legitimate states?

Philosophical anarchism

There are no preemptive reasons and hence no political authority. The authority of the state is not unique (it may have authority, but not political authority).

- Not to be confused with political anarchism, a view about social and political organization.

3 Key concepts 1

- power
- authority
- political authority
- preemptive (or exclusionary) reasons
- natural subordination theory
- divine authority theory
- natural duty accounts of political obligation
- associative accounts of political obligation
- transactional accounts of political obligation
- social contract theories of political authority
- political legitimacy
- philosophical anarchism

4 Reading assignment 2: Hobbes - Leviathan

4.1 Of the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning Their Felicity and Misery

1. People differ in physical strength and mental capabilities but when all taken together, no man can claim superiority over another.

2. All men think they have bigger mental capabilities than the average. This is a good sign of equal distribution that everyone is happy with their share.

3. From the equality of ability arises equality of wants. Men become enemies when they want something which cannot be shared between them.

4. Thus one must increase his power to secure his position and possessions. Some take pleasure in acquiring more power than necessary.

5. One looks for companions that have equal power. Inequalities between peers create grief and damage.

6. Three causes of conflict: competition, diffidence, glory.

7. They make made invade (respectively) for: gain, safety, reputation.

8. War is the default state of men. War is not only manifested in fighting but also in disposition thereto. Peace is assurance of non-conflict.

9. The state of war creates too much uncertainty for the industry or cultivation of earth to be practiced or developed.

10. Our daily experience confirms the state of war: we travel with companions, we lock our doors, we lock our chests, we pay great deal of attention to security.

11. "Savages" in America live to this day in their "brutish" ways because there is no state or laws to regulate them.

12. Kings are in constant state of (cold) war with one another. But because they exercise control over their citizens, the citizens are not in war with one another.

13. Justice and injustice, good and evil, right and wrong, are societal notions and have no meaning in the state of war between men.

14. Men are inclined to peace by: fear of death, desire of necessary things for living, hope by their industry to obtain them.

4.2 Of the First and Second Natural Laws, and of Contracts

1. The **Right of nature** (*jus naturale*) is the liberty of each man to his own life and to defend it.

2. By **Liberty** we mean lack of external impediments preventing man from exercising his will (freedom *from*).

3. The **Law of nature** (*lex naturalis*) is man's obligation to sustain and defend his life.

4. Every man has obligation to seek peace as long as he has hope of obtaining it and right to defend him otherwise. These follow respectively from law of nature and right of nature.

5. In order to create peace we form the second law: every man shall exercise his liberty in relation to others only as much as he will allow it to be exercised against him.

6.

7. Difference between **renouncing** and **transferring** right.

8. Rights can be only transferred voluntarily in expectation for some good in return. For example one cannot lay down their right of resisting assault because this can only harm them.

9. A **contract** is a mutual transferring of rights.

11. A contract can be called **pact** or **covenant** if it is to be delivered in the future by one side.

18. When both parties perform their part of the contract in the future, it is void unless there is no power governing both of them to hold their promises.

19. Civil estate guarantees the execution of the contract.

20. That which cannot hinder man from performing his part of the contract cannot be admitted as the cause of hindrance.

27. Covenants entered through fear (such as ransom for a prisoner of war or kidnapping) have to be respected until rendered void by the civil law.

28. A former covenant makes void a later.

29. A covenant not to defend myself from force by force is always void. A man may covenant *unless I do so, kill me* but he cannot covenant *unless I do so, I will not resist when you come to kill me*.

31. Two elements of human nature help make sure man keeps his word: fear of consequence for breaking one's word and glory or pride in appearing not to break one's word.

4.3 Of Other Laws of Nature

1.

2. **Injustice** is defined as *not performing the covenant*. Everything that is not unjust is just.

3. There must be some coercive power to force men to be just.

40. The way, or means, of peace are justice, gratitude, modesty, equity, mercy.

41. *But yet if we consider the same theorems as delivered in the word of God that by right commands all things, then are they properly called laws.*

4.4 Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Commonwealth

1. The final cause of men in the introduction of restraint upon themselves is to stop the misery of war.

2.

3. The multitude united in one person (or assembly of persons) is called a **commonwealth**, in Latin *civitas*.

14. He that carries that person is called **sovereign**, is said to have **sovereign power** and everyone besides is his **subject**.

4.5 Of the Rights of Sovereigns by Institution

Commonwealth is established once everyone makes covenant with everyone else to respect the man or assembly given that role. Commonwealth is granted the *right to present* (represent).

4.6 Of the Liberty of Subjects

1. Liberty is defined as absence of external opposition.

3. A man in commonwealth obeys the law for the *fear* of consequences but he has the *liberty* to fuck around and find out.

4. *Liberty* and *necessity* are consistent because every action man does willingly proceeds from some cause. The root of all causes are initial actions of God.

12. If the sovereign commands a man to kill, wound, or in other way harm himself, he has the right to disobey.

13. One is not obliged to confess a crime he has committed (without assurance of pardon).

17. To resist the sword of the Commonwealth in defence of another man, guilty or innocent, no man has liberty.

21. The obligation of subjects to the sovereign lasts only as long as the sovereign is able to protect them.