



# Political Philosophy

Week 1.  
Introduction





VOLGHETE GIOCHI ARMIAR. COSTEI VOCHI REGGETE CHE IN FIGURATA ZESSE DELLA CORONATA LAUREL. SOPRA CIASCUNO

GLI ATTI ONE SON

























*"Niemand hat  
das Recht  
zu gehorchen"*



*Hannah Arendt*  
14. Oktober 1906 - 4. Dezember 1975



‘The expression “political philosophy”, which I avoid, is extremely burdened by tradition. When I talk about these things, academically or nonacademically, I always mention that there is a vital tension between philosophy and politics. That is, between man as a thinking being and man as an acting being...

... the philosopher can be objective with regard to nature, and when he says what he thinks about it he speaks in the name of all mankind. But he cannot be objective or neutral with regard to politics.’

- Arendt, interview with Gunter Gaus

Let's start with a deceptively  
simple task...

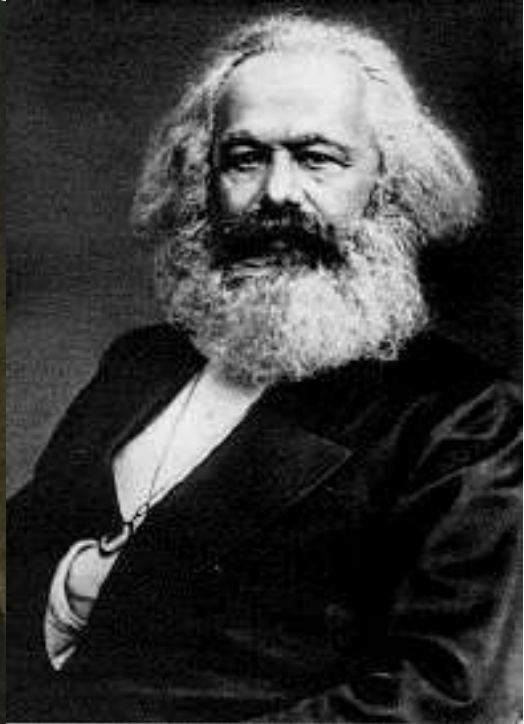
What is politics to you?





# What is politics?

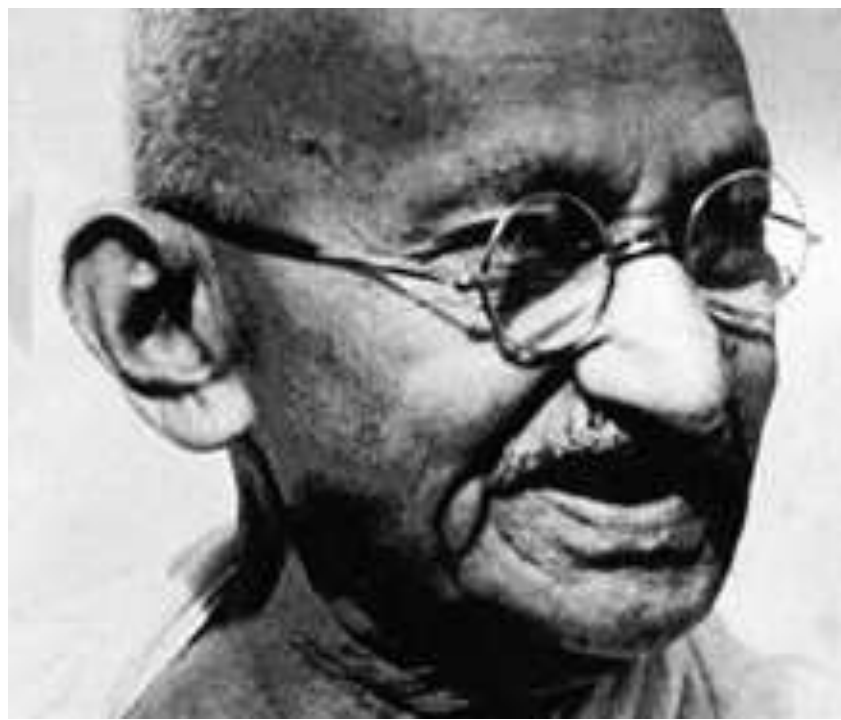
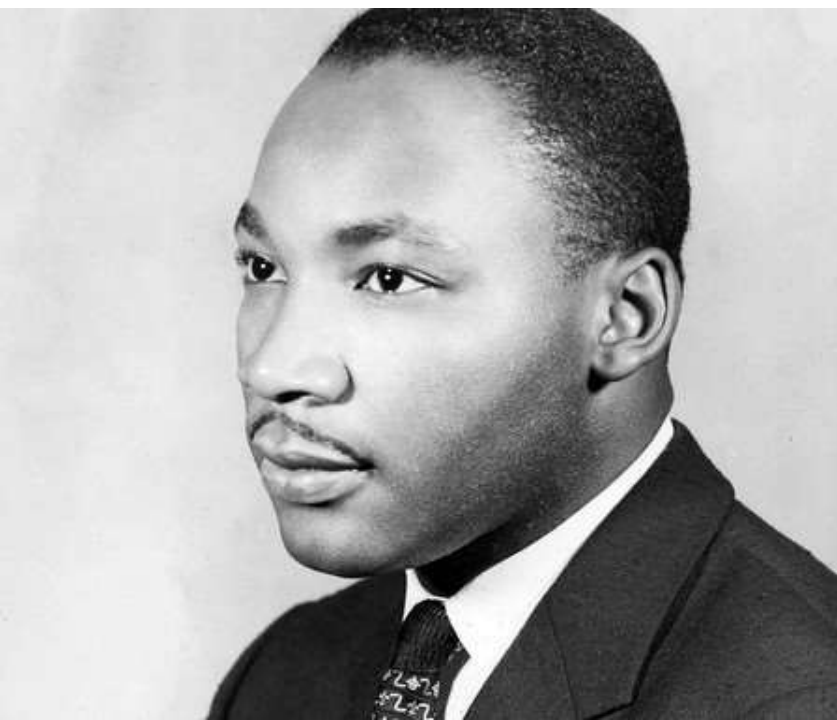
- Greek word *polis*, city-state
- How we can and should live together, as a society
- Like *philosophy*, the earliest written *political* ideas emerge in ancient Athens
- Finding a basis not in mythology or received wisdom about the most reasonable and just ways to live together
- Changing society in order to enable human flourishing
- Thinking systematically and critically about how we live together...







ROSA LUXEMBOURG  
(Fiche anthropométrique de la prison de Varsovie)









- |     |                       |                                  |   |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1.  | 14 <sup>th</sup> Jan  | Introducing Political Philosophy | Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> ; Arthashastra   |
| 2.  | 21 <sup>st</sup> Jan  | Do we need to be ruled?          | Machiavelli, <i>Discourses</i> ; Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>   |
| 3.  | 28 <sup>th</sup> Jan  | Democracy is joy                 | Spinoza, <i>TTP</i> ; Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i>  |
| 4.  | 4 <sup>th</sup> Feb   | The Rights of Men                | Locke, <i>2<sup>nd</sup> ToG</i> ; "Declaration of the Rights of Man"   |
| 5.  | 11 <sup>th</sup> Feb  | The Rights of Everyone Else      | Wollstonecraft, <i>Vindication</i> ; Toussaint Louverture   |
| 6.  | 18 <sup>th</sup> Feb  | The economic is political        | Marx, <i>Capital</i>  |
| 7.  | 25 <sup>th</sup> Feb  | Reform or revolution?            | Sarah Grimké, <i>Letters</i> ; Jane Addams, <i>Democracy and Social Ethics</i> ; Rosa Luxemburg, "Social Reform or Revolution?" |
| 8.  | 4 <sup>th</sup> March | Resistance: peaceful or violent? | Gandhi, <i>Non-Violence in Peace and War</i> ; MLK, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"; Malcolm X, <i>Autobiography</i>            |
| 9.  | 11 <sup>th</sup> Mar  | The Cult of the Individual       | Ayn Rand, <i>Atlas Shrugged</i>   |
| 10. | 18 <sup>th</sup> Mar  | Liberalism and Justice           | Rawls, <i>Theory of Justice</i> ; Berlin, "Two Conceptions"   |
| 11. | 25 <sup>th</sup> Mar  | Politics for Non-Humans          | Peter Singer, <i>Animal Liberation</i> ; Arne Naess, <i>Ecology of Wisdom</i>   |
| 12. | 1 <sup>st</sup> April | Capability and Choice?           | Martha Nussbaum, <i>Creating Capabilities</i> ; Amartya Sen, <i>Development as Freedom</i> .                                    |

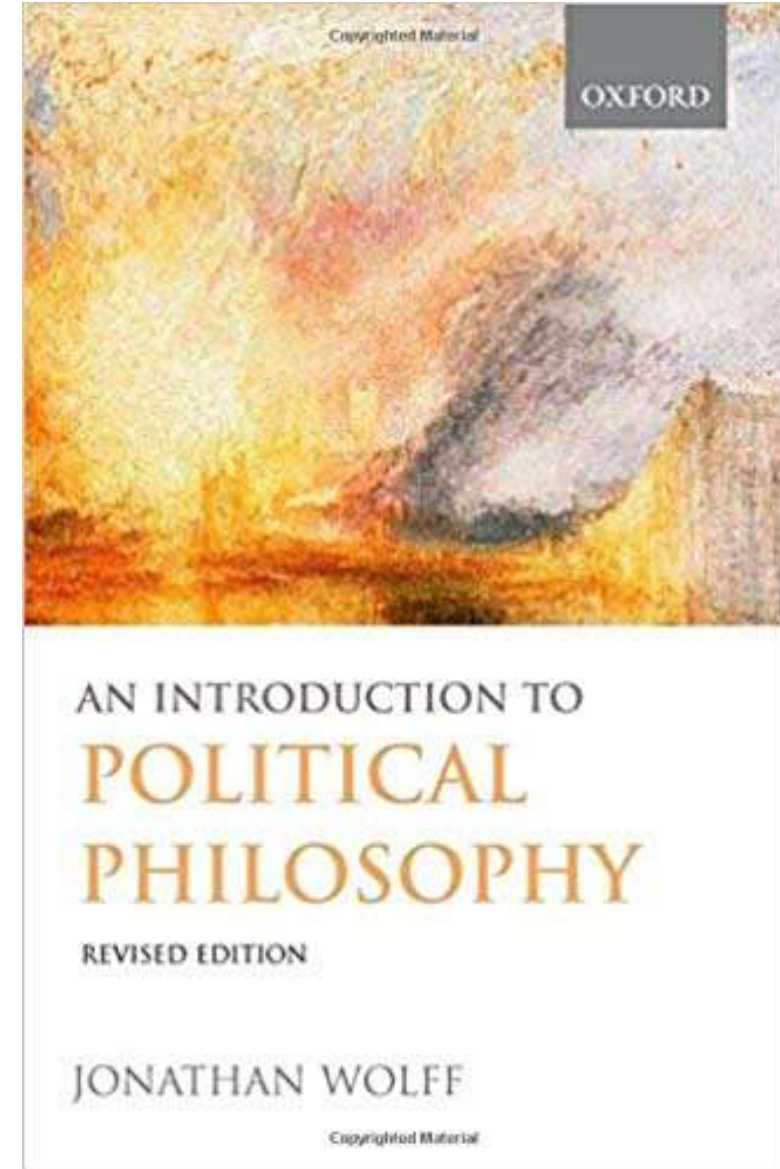
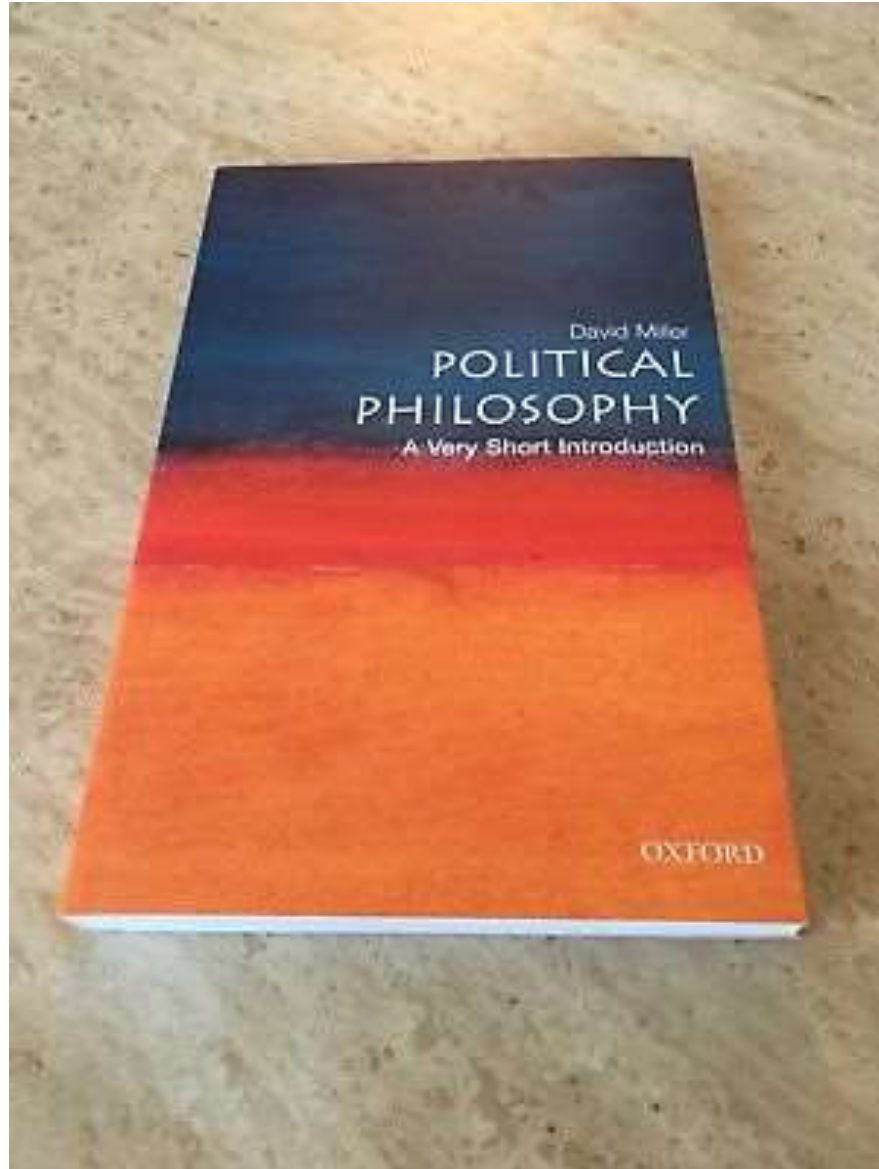
# What you'll need

- Moodle login
- All readings available as photocopies, with further texts online

Some good introductory books:

- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*
- David Miller, *A Very Short Introduction to Political Philosophy*







# Moodle login

Username: firstnamelastname

Password: FirstNameInitial  
(capitals)

- E.g. Theresa May
- Username: theresamay
- Password: THERESAM



# Course paperwork

01

Before going to break, take a moment to complete the course forms

02

Reflect to yourself, and discuss with your neighbour, what you'd like to get out of the course

03

If there's any questions come and talk to me during the break or email later:  
[Dan.Taylor@marywarldcentre.ac.uk](mailto:Dan.Taylor@marywarldcentre.ac.uk)

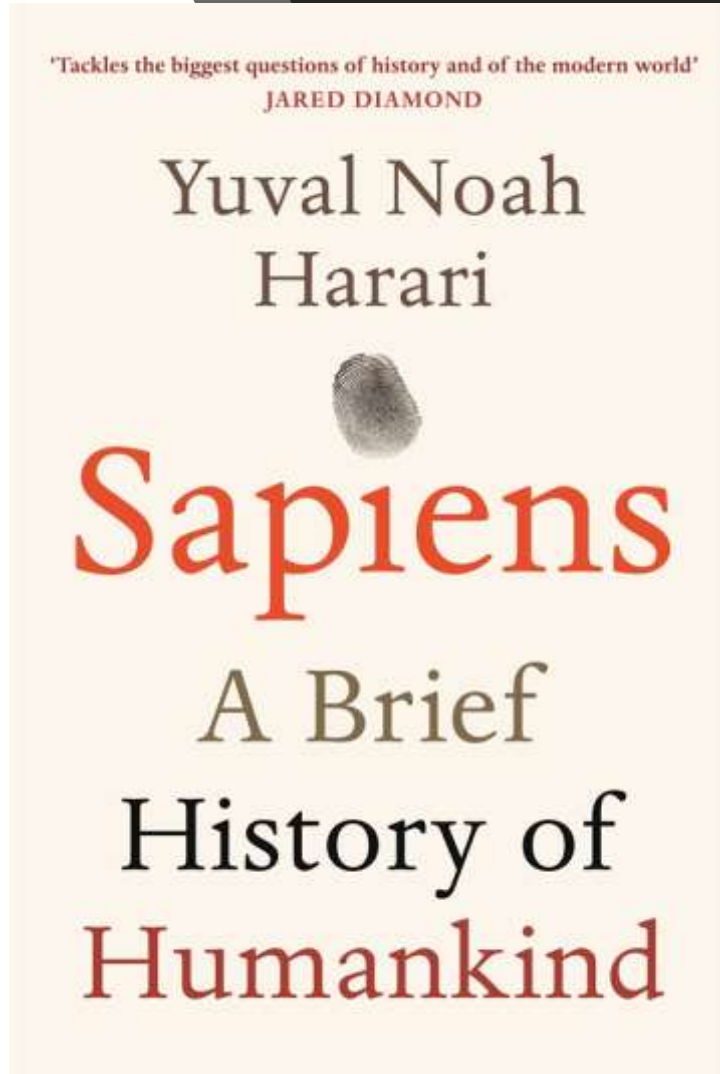








# Political animals?



- Is politics hardwired into human nature?
- Are we predisposed to forming societies, and even particular kinds?
- Take a look and discuss Aristotle's view...



# Political animals

- Aristotle possibly first to produce a political science
- For him, politics is founded in human nature: we are social and political animals (*politikon zoon*), with a capacity for reason and speech
- We naturally form relations that begin with families, households, communities. The best of these is the city-state.
- Its goal is the 'highest good' of all its members
- He also outlines six political models and assesses whether they are just, based on if they benefit only some or all members (democracy, aristocracy and monarchy)

‘It is evident, then, that those constitutions that look to the common benefit turn out, according to what is unqualifiedly just, to be correct, whereas those which look only to the benefit of the rulers are mistaken and are deviations from the correct constitutions. For they are like rule by a master, whereas a city-state is a community of free people.’

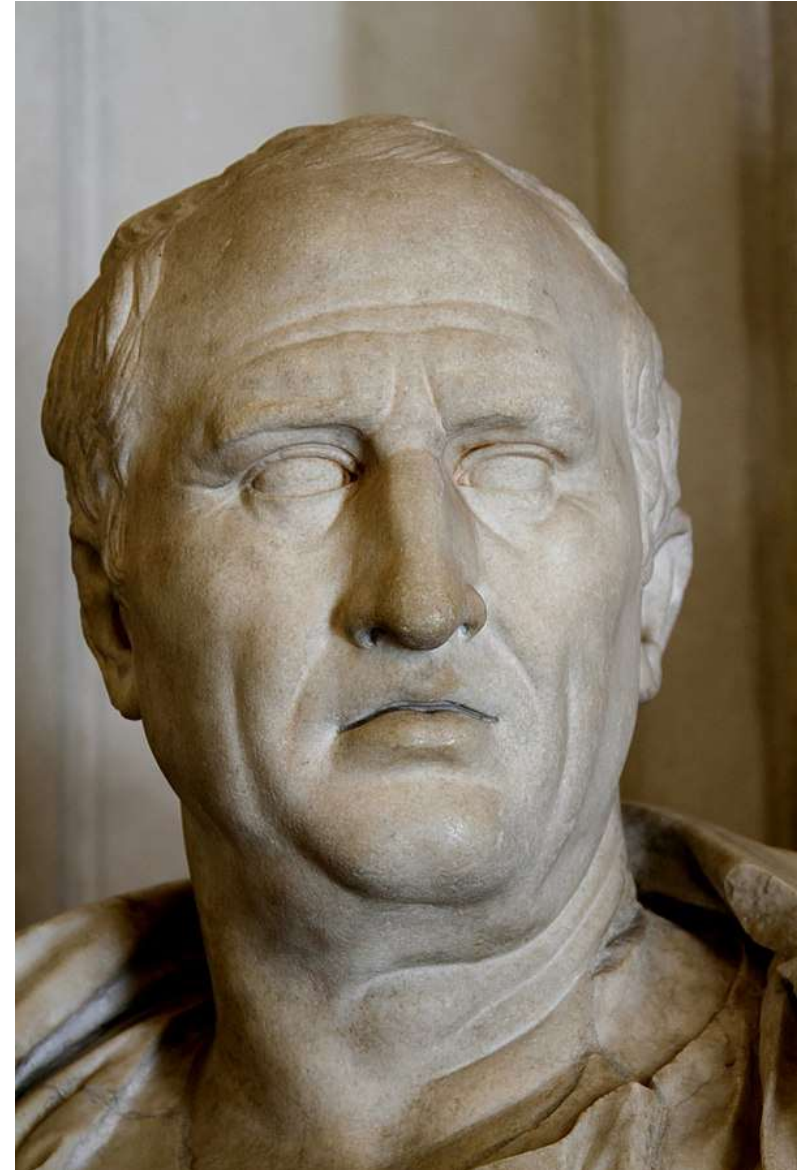
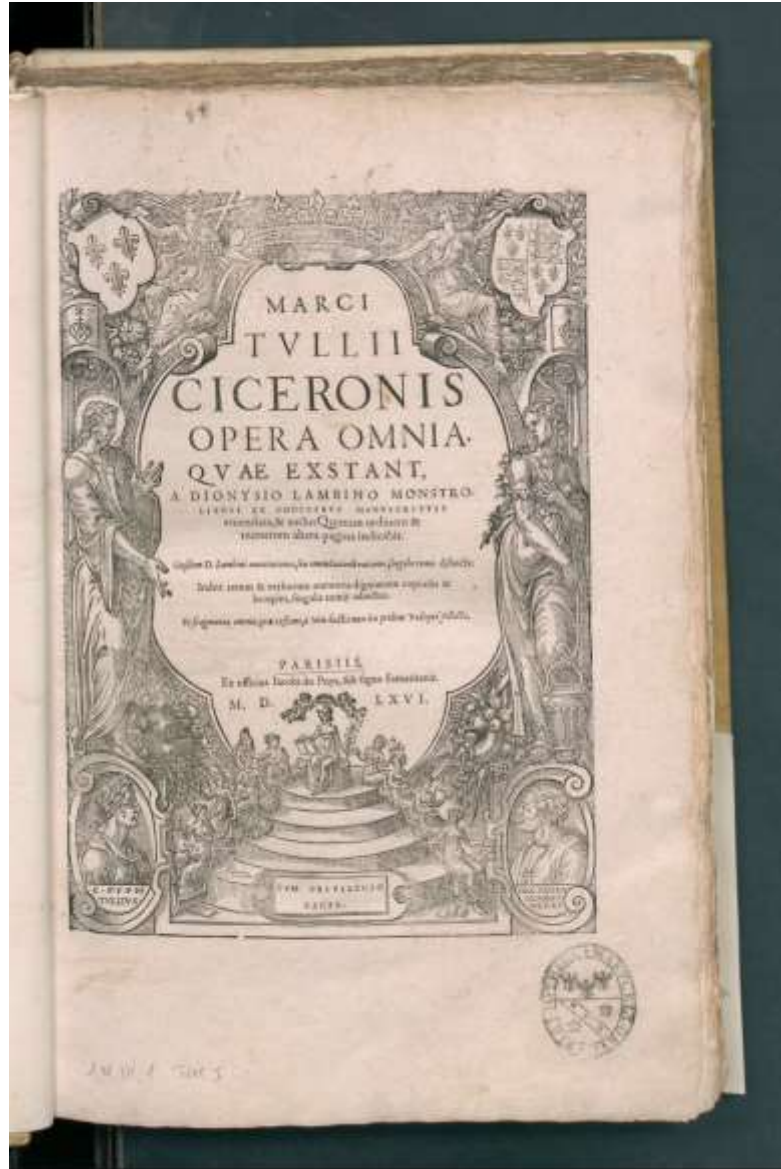
‘Now in every case the citizen-body of a state is sovereign; the citizen-body *is* the constitution. Thus in democracies the people are sovereign, in oligarchies the few. That, we say, is what makes the one constitution differ from the other’

‘In the state, the good aimed at is justice; and that means what is for the benefit of the whole community.’



# Political animals

- Aristotle also used real and historical examples to explore the difference between theory and practice
- Societies vary, though all share some kind of common conflict between rich and poor, and a middle class in between
- The ideal state should maximise the happiness of all citizens, and give everyone a chance to participate
- Exile is a fate worse than death
- But Aristotle also justified slavery and was critical of democracy





‘And we recently discovered, if it was not known before, that no amount of power can withstand the hatred of the many. The death of this tyrant (Julius Caesar), whose yoke the state endured under the constraint of armed force and whom it still obeys more humbly than ever, though he is dead, illustrates the deadly effects of popular hatred; and the same lesson is taught by the similar fate of all other despots, of whom practically no one has ever escaped such a death. **For fear is but a poor safeguard of lasting power; while affection, on the other hand, may be trusted to keep it safe for ever.**’

# Cicero on virtue

- Aristotle's political theory and the wider politics of Greece were built on by later writers like Cicero
- The moral equality of human beings in nature
- True glory and self-interest is achieved in serving the state
- The happiness of the citizens is through wealth, glory and 'virtue', which leaders should realise
- Virtuous model of political figures driven by duty and respect for property
- Undermined in part by Cicero's own life and times

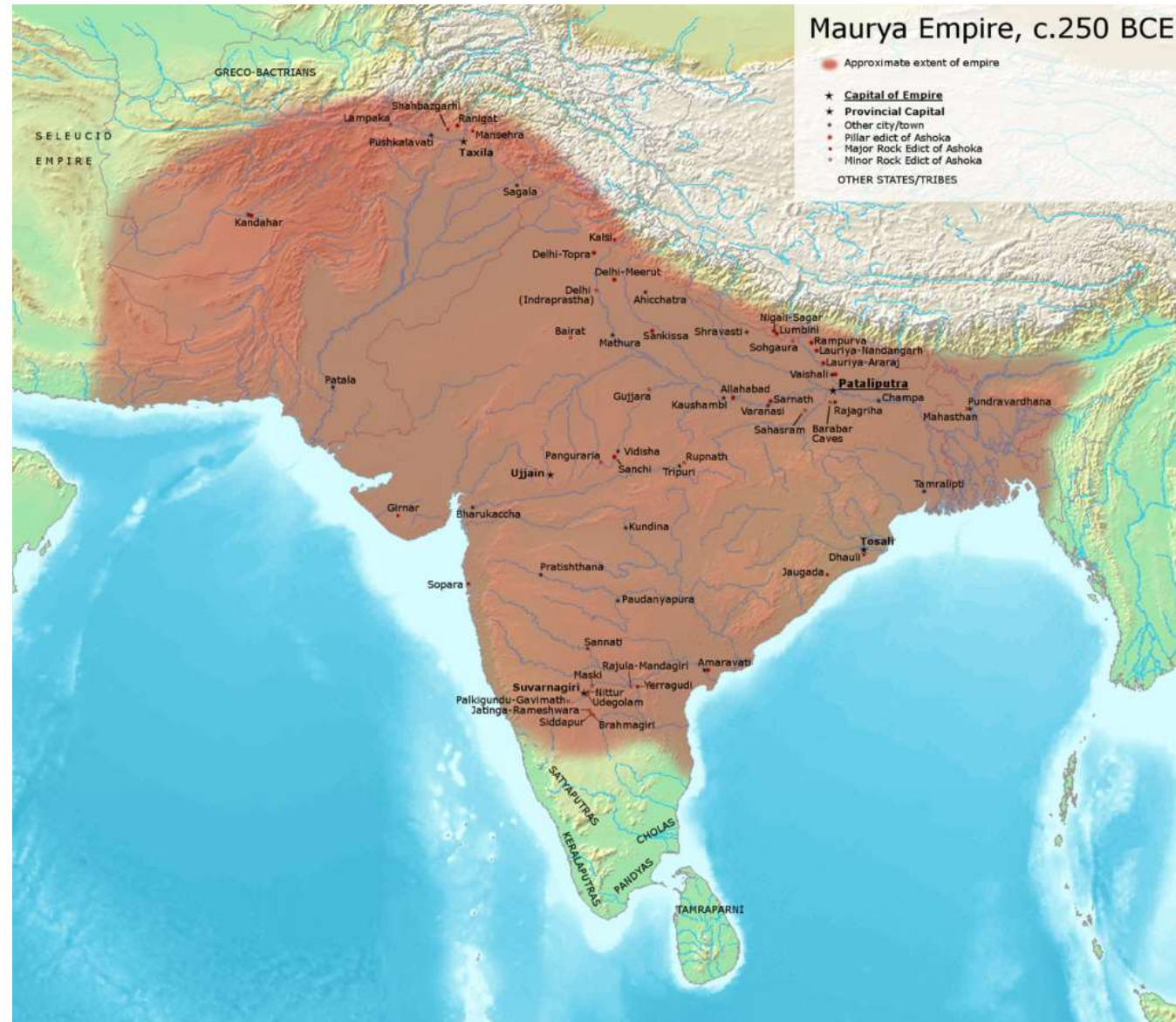




# The *Arthashastra*

- The “Science of politics”, an ancient Indian treatise on how to rule, written in Sanskrit between 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE
- Attributed to Kautilya, an advisor to Chandragupta Maurya, it combines Hindu philosophy and political pragmatism to demonstrate how the ruler can ensure security, peace and the common good
- ... While also pushing economic growth, waging effective wars and cultivating a network of spies...
- While coming down on the side of absolute monarchy, the work also argues for the value of helping the poor





# Virtuous rule...

Read the excerpt from the *Arthashastra*, and discuss:

- What characterises the rule of a 'saintly king'?
- Are there some common features to these ancient accounts?
- What do their ideas, values or contexts tell us about the emergence of a 'science of politics'?
- What is being left out?





From this arises the question whether it is better to be loved more than feared, or feared more than loved. The reply is, that **one ought to be both feared and loved, but as it is difficult for the two to go together, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be wanting.**

For it may be said of men in general that they are ungrateful, voluble, dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger, and covetous of gain; as long as you benefit them, they are entirely yours; they offer you their blood, their goods, their life, and their children, as I have before said, when the necessity is remote; but when it approaches, they revolt.

## Next week... *Do we need to be ruled?*

- An underlying premise of most political philosophy is the necessity of being ruled... but why is that the case?
- We'll turn to two important thinkers in the tradition, Machiavelli and Hobbes, who challenged this virtuous view of politics inherent in Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine and others
- Instead, they turn to human nature and the emotions, looking at our characters without any sentimentality or wishful thinking
- The result: a view of politics based on cunning and fear
- Does it stand up, then or now? Let's evaluate it next week.
- Email any questions to [dan.taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk](mailto:dan.taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk)