

I have deep passion for people and the society we create for ourselves and those to follow. Political Science, much as economics and engineering, possesses the rare and ultimate duty of having to understand, and attempt to overcome, the complexities and confusions humanity fashions for itself by investigating and contemplating those potential paths society must venture in order to have a more prosperous (or less perilous) future. In brief, my research interests lie in leveraging methods and notions in epistemology, metaphysics, and phenomenology to properly critique particular aspects of legal and political theory (such as sovereignty, state, governance, authority, consent, power, justice, and hierarchy) in order to construct a more suitable, comprehensive, and representative theory of international relations (IR). The reason for leveraging epistemology (or, the theory of knowledge) derives from the fact that perception is a core component to an individual's system of beliefs. Beyond ordinary perceptual beliefs, however, there are also moral, scientific, ideological, political and theological beliefs. As it pertains to the conduct of international politics – or politics in general – decision-makers are often fraught with having to make calculative choices with nothing more than their own perception and belief. Therefore, to understand epistemology is to understand how decision-makers turn a constructed idea based on their perception of the world into a justified belief which subsequently poses as 'knowledge'. Epistemology also touches upon rationality (or rational beliefs) and skepticism (the challenging of certain assumptions regarding the sources and limits to knowledge), along with various phenomenological concepts such as objectivity vs. subjectivity and the debate between empiricism vs. rationalism (otherwise, between the sources of knowledge – experience vs. reason). Leveraging certain phenomenological methods and notions can provide greater clarity to certain intricacies within the political world such as intention, representation, perception, context, ethics and language. Finally, metaphysics deals with existence and identity, the nature of mind (or, consciousness), and freedom of will (or, voluntarism vs. determinism), all of which have their connection to political science. For instance, when we talk of identity in the confines of politics, we typically associate it with nationalism. Even more, as it pertains to the nature of mind, we can easily draw connection to the jurisprudential notion of consent – specifically, what does it mean (or what is required) when one gives consent? In another way, the notion of consciousness serves to be an underpinning of recent trends in the study of nationalism – specifically, that a 'nation' is different than a 'state' and that not all nationalisms seek (or attain) statehood. Montserrat Guibernau classifies the state as being merely a political institution while defining the nation as a human group conscious which is psychologically, culturally, territorially, politically, and historically assimilated.

Throughout my study of IR and political theory I have identified several notions for which I believe I can provide increased clarity and completeness by leveraging my proposed methodology to re-investigate/re-consider such notions. For instance, James Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff, in their book *Contending Theories of International Relations*, remark that "one of the major contemporary controversies in international theory is whether states are as sovereign as they think they are" (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, pg. 428). In my writing sample, I propose that a State cannot be sovereign using a metaphysical and epistemological

approach. More precisely, if consent – following Frederick Pollock’s ‘mutual intention’ rather than John Austin’s ‘obedience’ - is to be the true operator (or medium) for which any individual ultimately resigns their right to author obligation, and given that consent is a product of one’s judgement and not sovereign propensities, then it cannot be such that whichever other entity (individual or collectivity) assumes and exercises such right does so to such sovereign pedigree. Aside from the notion of sovereignty, there is frequent confusion and conflict among political and legal theorists which results from equating the individual to the State. Such equating can be seen in Baron Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws* wherein he declares “the life of governments is like that of man. The latter has a right to kill in case of natural defence: the former have a right to wage war for their own preservation” (Montesquieu, pg. 133). Undoubtedly, such jurisprudential practice finds its roots in Hugo Grotius’s *ius gentium* (or, ‘the law common to all or many nations’) wherein he declares in *The Rights of War and Peace* that “the law of nations is a more extensive right” (Grotius, pg. 25). Given such difference in extent, the State can exercise its ‘right to kill’ not only in circumstances of mere and absolute defence, but also offensively (or, pre-emptively) which the individual obviously cannot. Thus, one is forced to ask: how is it that the aggregate of the individual (‘State’ or ‘Nation’), which is administered by, and a representative of, the individual, possesses a sort of right which is beyond the grasp of the individual?

Overall, I believe IR theorists must hypothesize about the world 500 years from now and consider its utterances and requirements; to contemplate deeply about that which might have been missed or mis-construed; and, to not clench so severely upon every which notion that has to-date been proposed as many political ideas have been erected merely to oblige circumstance. Even more, following Charles Beitz, much in the same way that law is a particular product of human consciousness and has a proper function within society, morality too has its place and purpose. Though we might recognize more readily our pressing need for, and role of, the former than we might the latter, in actuality society must have both, not only to survive – which law will facilitate - but to flourish – which only morality will accommodate.