

Philosophy, Politics and Economics – University of Warwick

We live in a world of conflict and contradictions. The collective-consciousness for political sovereignty and economic freedom has never been greater, and yet political discord and economic inequality has never been a more dire issue; the yearning for individual freedom comes into constant conflict with the need for social order. In order to understand the causes behind these disturbing conundrums, we must first look into the relationship between different philosophical ideas that underpin politics and economics which govern the world's actions and thoughts.

Hong Kong is one of the most diverse and economically free cities in the world. The evidence of its prosperity, together with my reading of *Capitalism and Freedom* by Milton Friedman, reinforced my belief that the free market mechanism is the key to achieve social stability and political harmony. However, after discovering in an IB Economics project that Hong Kong tops the list of the most unequal developed societies in the world, I began to first doubt the necessity of inequality as an opportunity cost of such economic achievement. Being the student leader of a school service project where we visit and provide essentials to homeless people in Hong Kong, witnessing poverty and destitution in one of the most prosperous cities in the world. This also brought the problem of social inequality right before my eyes. It led me to question Hong Kong's laissez-faire market system and convinced me to study economics at university in search of more effective alternatives. Reading *The Conscience of a Liberal* by Paul Krugman also gave me further academic insights on such market failures and the Keynesian solutions provided, such as the imposition of a higher tax rate on the rich and an increase in government expenditure on social welfare.

Of course, government intervention in the market economy has always been controversial, as it has been with the degree of authority governments have over individuals in society. Recent unrest within nations as varied as Egypt and Great Britain has emphasised the cruciality of this question. Whilst Rousseau stated in his *Social Contract* that the Will of the people is superior to that of a single person or government, erring by the population as evidenced recently in the London riots, along with my reading of liberal politics such as *On Liberty* by Mill and of works by Noam Chomsky, led me to believe in the priority of the individual conscience over that of the society and of state authority. In order for the individual to regulate his own conduct and beliefs however, stringent reasoning is required, which I believe can only arise with the possession of critical thinking as the structure for thought. The procedural, logical train of thought presented in *The Problems of Philosophy* by Russell gave me a sound introduction to the rigor needed for clarity in thinking.

I know that knowledge of PPE is not gained solely through the reading of books. I also gained valuable work experience this summer under Regina Ip, a member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council. The complex functioning of her political party and think tank in which I participated as an intern fascinated me. The experience I gained from the internship established my career aspirations of working in the Hong Kong government or more ambitiously, in the United Nations.

For this I have also participated in the Model United Nations and in inter-school debating competitions. Finally, I have been elected as Head Boy of my school for 2011-12 and participate in the School Council frequently.

I strongly believe I have the analytic rigour and commitment required to read PPE. Resolutions to the socio-political issues which trouble our society can only be found in these disciplines. If the world is going to make any progress towards a freer and happier future, it must be established in the academic fields of philosophy, politics and economics.