Political Legitimacy and the Limits of Power in Early Buddhism:

A Critical Conceptual Study of the Pāli Nikāyas

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Abstract

This paper examines the justification of political authority in the Pāli Nikāyas and the extent to which this can provide a rationale for their moral claims. Situated within the field of comparative political theory, it employs a critical conceptual analysis of kingship, collective authorisation, welfare, coercion, deliberation, and the political-religious nexus, illuminated by detailed exegeses of the Aggañña, Cakkavattisīhanāda, Kūṭadanta and Mahāparinibbāna discourses, and contextualised against selected passages from the Majjhima, Saṃyutta and Aṅguttara Nikāyas. It demonstrates that these Nikāyas call for a conditional justification of government based on protection, material provision, ethical conduct and avoidance of social decay, but cannot provide a justification for popular sovereignty, citizenship, and what modern interpreters understand to be constitutional accountability. What makes their contribution unique is their demonstration of the reliance of political order on circumstances in which coercion can do nothing, and of the refutation of any moral immunity on the part of rulers qua sovereigns, due to royal descent bribery swordsmanship, etc. Their analysis separates justificatory from institutional constraints, and reveals an accountability vacuum at work in politically legitimate monarchy. It further illustrates how renunciation constrains the importance of political success, without dispelling political responsibility. This setup makes a number of contributions to political science, making clear the sources of resources and also the institutional constraints present in early Buddhist accounts of legitimacy without implying that they prefigured liberal-democratic ideas.

Keywords: political legitimacy; early Buddhism; Pāli Nikāyas; kingship; coercion; comparative political theory; accountability

INTRODUCTION

Power, on its own, does not guarantee that it will be acquiesced in. A ruler might levy taxes, mobilise armies, punish transgressors, and be acquitted by the people, but be morally reprehensible. A community might recognise that there was a right basis for government without having the institutions needed to impose it on current rulers. Between a justification of authority and an effective limitation on its use lies the key problem of political theory and practice. It is also a useful way of approaching the Pāli Nikāyas. These have narratives on the rise of kingship, commentaries on the rule of kings, discussions of war and punishment, and reflections on the social effects of poverty, but they organise their material neither into a theory of the state nor, on a macro scale, into a philosophy of conduct. Their political insights can be best understood from arguments set when talking about religious teaching storytelling understanding what is wrong, and considerations of rank.

The central problem of this article is how the Nikāyas make political power conditionally defensible while narrowing the scope of legitimation to which rulers can appeal. Three related questions are addressed in turn. What considerations set apart justifiable use of force from domination? What restrictions are imposed on monarchy and how are these restrictions theoretically significant? To what extent are the resources available to Nikāya authors able to bear the weight of a modern argument for just government without importing intractable current constitutional commitments? All these questions are about justification, authority, coercion, and accountability, but not the virtue of early Buddhism, and the article will that means treat early Buddhist politics as an argument that can be criticized as well as because of its lacunae.

The argument is that the Nikāya texts selected sustain a conditional social-justification of the state, which exceeds the ruler's preferences and commands, but, which is institutionally incomplete. Authority is connected to conflict regulation, protection of persons, provision of material conditions for settled life, and conduct compatible with dhamma. The state's office does not erase the morality of action. Though the texts considered here do not advance a developed doctrine of electoral replacement, judicial review, representative authorisation, or common remedies to royal misdeeds. Their doctrine of legitimate power is so more persuasive as an account of the foundations of state legitimacy than as a theory of how the subordinates can reliably control the state. This is a hermeneutic, not a historical, conclusion about the texts.

The difference matters because two familiar readings conceal different parts of the evidence: one sees Buddhism as essentially apolitical and conceives of its theoretical encounters with government as accidental; another takes some passages as evidence that, in early Buddhism, the principles of democracy socialism the human rights of political communities, or a constitutional form of government in a chamber are already there. The first reading underestimates the political implications of doctrinal explanations of poverty and violence; the second rectifies apparently suggestive features into alleged identities and so makes absence in the canon invisible. Moore's account of the political canon in the Early Buddhist Discourses is mostly important because it both

acknowledges support for enlightened monarchy and argues that politics does not really matter much in Buddhist communities (Moore, 2015). This article recognizes both of these claimants but asks in more detail what remains of monarchy when the ruler does not meet the standards needed to earn the term.

Previous studies have argued that the idea of Buddhist kingship cannot be fully explained by the exercise of royal power alone. Gokhale (1966; 1969) introduced the state and the concept of the state into a sustained dialogue and Chakravarti (1987) paid closer attention to the social distinction into, which early Buddhist ideals found a place. They foreclose the idea of kingship as an undetermined moral relationship, outside of hierarchy, patronage, and material production. Tambiah (1976) demonstrated the relationship between political sovereignty and renunciation in a detailed account that underscores the value of studying religious and royal power in conjunction. Its recognized duration in history also illustrates the reasons why specific institutions should not be projected back into every Nikāya passage. This paper draws on this general consensus to pose questions but reserves its main textual argument for the four major Nikāyas.

This argument has three contributions to comparative political theory. First, it disaggregates the role and contestability of authority from the origin and exercise of authority. For example, collective choice in an origin story may justify the appointment to an office, but does not define the methods of selecting later occupants of the office. Such obligation may critique a policy but does not establish a legal claim. Second, the argument disaggregates ethical constraints, social limits, and structural controls.3 This prevents the existence of an ethical standard from being conflated with the demonstration of their enforceability by subjects. Third, it develops an idea of the non-exempting: a political office does not itself exempt its occupant from being subject to the distinction between permissible and harmful action. (This phrase is a technical reconstruction of the Pāli term used in these paragraph, and is not a direct translation from a single Pāli source.) The asymmetry of the argument is that we do not start from the hypothesis that if a text is early Buddhism it must logically contain an element of modern political theory. If it lacks a right of revolution, for instance, it is not necessarily not a good text. Still, we cannot really use that to argue something about that text in response to a question about enforceable accountability. Same here, we cannot use a theory of liberation that won't put citizenship on top of the list of human goods to powerfully push back against most modern political trends, but it may be sufficient to set our expectations for it in a different direction. Comparative questions are valuable when they alter the questions rather than simply expand the list of established pathways (Dallmayr, 2004; Jenco, 2007).

The article moves from method and conceptual distinctions, to close readings of political foundation, welfare, coercion, assembly, and social hierarchy, then on to religious authority, epistemic restraint, and the political stakes of renunciation. The last main sections turn to the reconstruction of an underlying conditional legitimacy, which tests, alternative, readings, and points to legitimate contemporary usage. The article concludes with the return to the accountability deficit. This does not mean to clear early Buddhist thought of all hierarchies, nor to dismiss them for failing to be modern. It means to pinpoint exactly what political criticisms they endorse, where that endorsement stops, and, which other assumptions would need to be made to push them farther.

SOURCES AND METHOD

2.1 Defining the textual corpus

The core corpus is the Dīgha Majjhima Saṃyutta, and Aṅguttara Nikāyas, identified as DN, MN, SN, and AN in what comes next. The core texts deal with DN 27, DN 26, DN 5, and DN 16. The ancillary texts add DN 2 and DN 31; MN 21, MN 61, MN 84, MN 86, MN 90, MN 93, MN 95, and MN 108; SN 3.8, SN 3.14–15, SN 3.25, SN 22.59, and SN 42.3; and AN 3.65 and AN 5.177. The motivation for the selection has been purposive: texts are included because they make directly political references or introduce a specific premise from which political judgement may logically flow. So it is not intended to be a statistical representative sample or a comprehensive concordance of every mention of a king.

The 'standard English translation editions as providing the reference sets DN – Walshe (1995); MN – Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi (1995); SN – Bodhi (2000); AN – Bodhi (2012). Citations specify the translation edition and the number of the discourse; the discourse numbers are more stable across printings than page numbers, and they enable comparison of text versions. Production dates for the ancient texts are not specified as a contrived single date of first publication; the dates in the citations distinguish the modern editions. Discussion paraphrases content with amplification rather than word-for-word quotation; Pāli concepts are maintained where an English equivalent would bias their interpretation; the translations are assumed to be scholarly intermediary translations rather than a wholly transparent translation of an unquestioned source text.

The 'early' of the title must be qualified. All extant Nikāyas are vehicles of oral transmission and re-composition. Their contents can no longer be adduced as if each were the one-time recording, in a single moment, of the historical Buddha's speech. Wynne (2005) gives a large case for the historical credibility of early Buddhist literature; yet, historical reliability cannot drive out necessity to pay attention to layering, genre, and claim-type. I seek to trace political reasoning within the body of received Pāli collections; not to prove the specific dating of individual passages, or their probably single authorial intention, or the precise constitutional pattern of each polity.

The exclusion of later materials is important for analysis. The ten royal virtues, detailed stories of righteous conquest, and later interpretations of Buddhist law may be relevant to Buddhist political traditions, but they do not act as evidence for a specific claim about the four Nikāyas. Also, Aśokan inscriptions are essential to the study of Buddhist statecraft, but they are not used here to demonstrate that a Nikāya discourse originally included a particular constitutional doctrine. Vinaya materials are

referenced only to indicate the boundaries of the corpus; a thorough examination of monastic legal procedures would require a separate study. This approach helps avoid the common tendency to construct an appealing composite political system from sources that differ in genre, context, and historical period.

2.2 Conceptual reconstruction and contextual control

The method uses both contextual reading and explicit conceptual reconstruction. Contextual reading considers who is speaking, to whom, under what narrative circumstances, and for what stated religious or practical purpose. Reconstruction identifies premises that can reasonably be inferred from the argument and checks whether they remain consistent across different passages. These processes should remain separate. For example, a narrative might mock royal pride without suggesting a new constitution. In the same way, a story about punishment might include an argument about policy failure, even if its main goal is religious teaching. The lack of a modern treatise format does not mean political reasoning is absent.

Still, Skinner's (1969) caution about making the familiar unjustified attribution of views to earlier sources is a methodological warning rather than a ready-made answer. Oral and composite religious literature is not quite the same interpretive problem as a single political tract produced by one person. It would be artificial to trace every element of the Nikāyas to one recoverable intervention. Still the discipline remains. An interpretation should not answer a question that the language and context of a passage does not support. To say, for example, that DN 27 advocates universal suffrage would require evidence about the composition, rights, and longevity of the authorising community. Collective selection alone would not provide the evidence.

Freeden's (1996) conceptual approach is useful, though in a more restricted way. Political concepts gain meaning through their connections with other concepts. In these texts, kingship is linked to protection, moral causation, wealth, restraint, and renunciation. Removing one concept from this arrangement can change its meaning. Consent, if viewed apart from the narrative's account of moral decline, appears more liberal than it does within the story's context. Welfare, when separated from the maintenance of order, can resemble a theory focused on equal distribution. The reconstruction so focuses on conceptual relationships rather than treating individual terms as definitive proof of a full doctrine.

Three levels of claim will be distinguished. A direct textual claim is a claim about what the text explicitly presents: e.g. the not providing resources to the needy in DN 26's account of social decline. An interpretive claim is about the import of this presentation: a lacking of material provision reduces the basis for justification of rulership. A constructive claim is about how to extend this analysis in the contemporary context: public authorities should carry out deprivation-sensitive evaluations before the expansion of punishments. Evidential for the first, argumentative for the second, additional normative and institutional commitments for the third. The article's use of reconstruction and extension is supposed to mark these distinctions.

2.3 Evidence and interpretive limitations

Contradictory or awkward clauses are present and preserved, rather than deselected as mere incidental noise. The heretical nature of the Aggañña critique of inherited dominance exists alongside the "world-reading" in which social classes persist; the broad duties of a model king matches the concentration of power; the account of Mahāparinibbāna appreciates continuity alongside its deferring to an unspecified "we". These are the stuff of questioning. A conceptual analysis that only renders accessible the clauses that support the modern political archetype is no analysis at all.

The paper also separates norms of text from history of action. Schopen (1991) objected to the primacy of scripture in establishing norms because of the assumption that they reveal what people actually did. The present paper does not make any empirical assertions about the rulers of early Buddhist states being obligatorily kind or the monasteries being obligatorily autonomous. To establish such propositions would require inscriptions archaeology legal records and behaviorally situated evidence. Here, the object is the justificatory devices of a text tradition. Evidence of subsequent acts of violence would neither undermine these devices nor show how they worked in practice.

Interpretive firmness is based on proportionality of argument. Repetition through many kinds of writing builds a case for a reconstruction, but not a system. The nuclear similarity among welfare advice, condemnation of conquest, and rejection of inherited spiritual right is strong but not complete, and it cannot be used to build a general right of disobedience to government into the collections. The silence is because of this achieved prudently: the article is careful not to maintain that, since no developed system is found where it ought to be found, no early Buddhist had ever conceived of a developed system. Narrow but defensible.

LEGITIMACY AUTHORITY AND THE MEANING OF LIMITS

3.1 Political legitimacy as a question of justification

Legitimacy has both sociological and normative aspects. Sociologically, it refers to the belief that a ruler or institution is entitled to govern, while normatively, it concerns whether that claim is justified. The distinction between these senses is indispensable when reading religious accounts of power. A story of an exemplary monarch may help sustain acceptance of monarchy, but its normative criteria can also be used to criticise particular monarchs. Acceptance and justification may overlap without being identical. Weber's (1978) account of legitimate domination remains important for analysing how authority is recognised, without requiring the analyst to endorse the moral validity of every recognised form.

Beetham (1991) complicates the reduction of legitimacy to belief by bringing rules, justificatory beliefs,

and works of consent into the same frame as power. This can be used to render the Nikāya evidence without collapsing it into a single contractual structure. An envisaged ruler might be conventionally established, identified as safeguarding a morally ordered world, and praised for a patchwork of regular observances all separated elements. An official royal title alone won't establish whether the ruler performs their function, and an origin of selection alone won't establish whether obedience is entirely volitional. This article this way asks what legitimates justification first, before asking how that justification is socially distributed.

Another difference involves the justification of the institution and the office-holder. Simmons (1999) explains how an abstract argument for the welfare of the state cannot imply the special moral relation of the state to each person under it. In our question, this distinction forbids a claim that government correcting disorder is an ultimate obligation to obey any ruler simply because he can bring order. The justification of kingship as an office can leave open the issue of legitimacy of succession, scope of jurisdiction, and response to an individual command. The Nikāyas are often clearer about the role of government than about those relational issues.

Buchanan's (2002) analysis also helps to keep legitimacy, political authority, and democracy from being conflated. The questions of whether an agent may permissibly exercise political power, whether subjects owe obedience, and whether the governing procedure is democratic are distinct. Early Buddhist texts may address one of these issues without fully resolving the others. For example, stating that a king should protect the poor does not show that subjects owe him a content-independent duty of obedience. Same here, not expressing such a duty does not amount to philosophical anarchism. The corpus should be allowed to leave some questions unanswered.

3.2 Four objects of political evaluation

This papers tests authority on four dimensions. First, its source relates to the way an office is created or assumed. Second, its reason concerns the value at stake, which justifies maintaining the governing arrangement. Third, its practice is concerned with the means of pursuing that value. Fourth, its challenge relates to the question of whether those who are subject to a policy are able to challenge and rectify it. These dimensions are distinct, and one could conceive of a collectively mandated autocrat who governs cruelly, or of a benevolent despot who increases people's welfare, or of a formally legal policy that is not challenged by those affected.

The Nikāya material is most articulate on purpose and exercise, most astonishing but most limited on origin, and least developed on contestability. This is the primary analytic assumption to be made in the article, which must be proven not obvious. DN 27 puts forward an account of selection based on a function. DN 26 and DN 5 tie order to material provision and the non-efficiency of punishment alone. SN 3.14–15 and SN 42.3 oppose the moral 'glamour' of violence. DN 16 presents a language of assembly and collective continuity. These should not be played down, but also, one should not be presented to the exclusion of the others.

In addition, the structure makes a distinction between permission and praise. Governments may be tolerable because there are no options as good but good kings are still far short of perfect. The brilliant qualities of a wheel-turning monarch should not suddenly impose requirements on all governments in general. Same thing, a ruler's inability to fulfill religious perfection does not necessarily entail that every government act is rendered invalid. The Nikāyas do not provide a quantitative line for eligibility. Because of this paper builds on the criteria and defeasible conditions to argue, rather than invent a complete test that nowhere appears in the sources.

3.3 Three senses of limiting power

A justificatory limit is a reason, which a ruler cannot legitimately override simply by calling himself a ruler. A king cannot legalize brutality by decreeing it to be part of the royal program. A social control takes effect via associations and reputation advice reliance upon the all-important resources or the prospect of putting some distance between oneself and the ruler. An institutional control relies on a publicly known process and someone who has the power to examine and to countermand (or, at best, to threaten to countermand) the actual ruler. These are not the same things: morality may play a role without deciding who ought to be ruler, advisors' recommendations may be non-binding without amounting to judicial review, and so on.

The distinction is not meant to privilege written constitutions as the only meaningful form of restraint. Traditions assemblies corporate bodies, and inherited expectations can effectively limit power without a single constitutional document. The test is practical: who may act, under what accepted rule, with what consequence, and against whose opposition? If a supposed limit disappears whenever the ruler ignores advice, it is not the same as a control that others can lawfully enforce. This question is in particular important when political legitimacy depends on the ruler's character. A setup designed for a virtuous ruler must also be considered under the assumption of an unvirtuous one.

Pettit's (1997) account of domination clarifies this issue. A person may still be subject to another's unchecked discretion, even if that discretion is used kindly. This is not presented as a hidden teaching of the Nikāyas, but rather as an external critique of their institutional limitations. Does a righteous monarchy protect people from arbitrary interference, or does it simply require them to trust that the ruler will remain righteous? This distinction shapes how kingship and welfare are interpreted. A benevolent duty can alleviate suffering while still leaving the recipient politically subordinate.

So the working out of the idea of conditional legitimacy is both humbler and more real. The rule of government is necessarily just on those goods and constraints that its agents do not produce due to its rules. It is not presumed to be correct in itself. But standards do not provide an authorised technique of revoking office when they are infringed. Accepting both these claims enables the

earliest Buddhist politics to be considered on its own terms, without allowing it to have any constitutional perfection. The subsequent interpretations address the power of its standards and the effect of its institutional reticence.

THE AGGAÑÑA DISCOURSE AND THE FOUNDATION OF AUTHORITY

4.1 A political genealogy within a dispute over status

This more common way of reading DN 27 as a Buddhist social-contract text does good service, but runs the danger of making the ruler-selection the whole point of the discourse. The story invokes brahmanical claims for superior birth; situates distinctions among human and kingship in a wider story of upheaval appropriation resistance, and right action. Political office appears in this genealogy but did not always proceed from a uniquely sacred element in rulership. What it is not is a credible historical account of the emergence of the state; what it is an account of how social differences are mediated and explicable rather than justified by primordial predetermination (Walshe 1995 DN 27) (Walshe, 1995, DN 27).

The significance of Collins's (1993) aside lies in its keeping together the literary context, the hierarchy, and the question of the contract. A reading focused on the origins of monarchy may fail to see the way in which the debate draws itself into an attack on claims to purity and value based on inheritance. Conversely, a reading that sees only the anti-satirical elements will miss that a narrative can sever one origin for authority and suggest an alternate by providing a different account of the physical and moral fitness of the chosen. The political question is not then whether the argument in DN 27 itself is earnest philosophy or religious satire. It is rather the significance of the narrative of collective appointment as it works its way through this argument that repositions superiority away from birth and toward conduct and knowledge.

In the story conflict creates a real demand for such an agent to intervene in evil. An individual is given a part of the produce in return for a set of chores. The ruler's appointment and his payment are because of this functions, and come to be linked to a functional need that others have. The sort of power that is described is neither a gift nor the exclusive result of the ruler's own ability to in still fear. Its origin can be explained by a diagram of community, activity, and reward. These features are grounds for describing the story as having a contractual element without the term suggesting institutions and rights from modern contract theories.

The key interpretive inference is functional dependence. If a political office arises to address certain problems, those problems help explain why the office should exist. The narrative thereby makes possible a question that a purely self-authorising conception of power would suppress: does the ruler perform the function for which authority was established? This question does not require the narrative to state an explicit revocation clause. It follows from the relation between authorisation and purpose. Yet, the absence of a revocation clause still matters when one moves from evaluating performance to determining what people are entitled to do about failure.

4.2 Authorisation and its boundaries

The collective acceptance of Mahāsammata's men is politically relevant because the ruler has been chosen from the category of being in question. The story need not posit unbridgeable dissimilarity of kind between ruler and subject. The argument may undermine the assertion that all officeholders are superior due to holding office. Still the story makes no mention of a continuing electorate, the fate of voters, the principles on which elections are made, electoral competition, nor political status of those Next born. Collective origin is not identical with subsequent continuous popular sovereignty. A founding act may provide for an institution that still functions hierarchically.

Same thing, to authorise an office is not to propagate all judgement to the holder of the office. Though DN 27 does not articulate that distinction in contemporary legal terminology, its functional description does not demand an unchecked transfer. The institutions reacts to blameworthy behaviour, and the story situates that activity in a moral world that exists before the appointment is made. The ruler does not, because of this, become the sole author of distinction between good and bad. So my story will provide reasons for limited-purpose authorisation, not a theory that all of the king's actions are expressions of community will.

This is a more restrained claim than asserting that the text establishes a sovereign people. Popular sovereignty would require a continuing location of ultimate authority in the political community, together with some account of how that authority is expressed. DN 27's community chooses a functionary, but the narrative does not explain its later constitutional capacities. Nor does it state that each individual retains a right to withdraw consent. Those propositions may be defended by contemporary Buddhist democrats, but they would be constructive developments. Their plausibility should be assessed openly instead of being secured by attributing them to the ancient narrative.

The formula of remuneration sets yet another limit. It concedes to the ruler, through a share of the produce, that he has some costs of governing and that his existence is due to social production; it this way entails a dependent relation of the ruler to the community. But a contribution to the basis of maintenance is not interchangeable with a power over taxation. There is no textual support for conceiving of a legislature that delegates revenue-raising or for a standalone personal duty to pay. Even more modestly, the result remains: the ruler is supplied with resources as remuneration for a function, which makes free-riding on them less justifiable in principle than if the produce were by right his alone.

4.3 From genealogy to accountability

A functional origin could offer this critical measure even in the absence of any enforcement mechanism. Think of a ruler who applies harsh punishments to crimes that threaten his private wealth, but does not punish ordinary people. It is not just that he has no magnanimity; he has deflected an office instituted for

collective disorder into private gain. This hypothetical case supplies the political dimension of the genealogy; it also suggests why an ethical interpretation need not be limited to the private character of the ruler. The question is about the exercise of an authorized office, and the allocation of its profits.

Yet the same genealogy may also be a justification for centralised power. If chaos is represented as the greatest threat, subjects may be induced to prefer the king's power of restoring order over their own power to resist him. A record of derivative punishment may even be used to justify violent hierarchy, in particular when the governed have no obvious means of monitoring its exercise. There is so a dual resource and threat in the story. Its political implications cannot be derived from either alone. A strong reconstruction should still question what other principles enabled functional necessity to be used as a norm for everlasting governance.

That modern contract theories are themselves quite different, makes the question less whether DN 27 is similar to some unitary Western model, but rather whether agreement works along any one of many different lines. Agreement can be a reason why an institution is formed, as a source of authority for a particular agent, as a creator of duties, or as a limitation. These roles don't necessarily follow in the same order. The Aggañña story seems to answer the first, and arguably the second, role only. The implications of agreement for post-agreement duties and exceptions are left imprecise, but that does not detract from the comparative importance of the text.

Lastly, by explaining the foundation of its inherited categories in human activity and custom, the discourse safeguards its account of politics from social critique. As soon as differences are formed by human activity they can be scrutinised for their justification. But the discourse does not eliminate every difference it applies. One sentence can invalidate final metaphysical grounds for hierarchy and still employ social distinctions in this text. Because of this the political lesson is one of conditionality; not prescriptive. Kingship can be understood via morally relevant behavior in human interactions, but the foundation does not, on its own, guarantee equality of citizenship or primacy of the people's power to choose.

RIGHTEOUS KINGSHIP AND THE AUTHORITY OF DHAMMA

5.1 The king as bearer of an obligation

DN 26 describes the wheel-turning monarch as an ideal ruler whose authority is closely linked to just protection and material responsibility. The monarch is advised to rely on dhamma and to ensure safety throughout various segments of society. He is also told to address deprivation and to seek moral counsel. This depiction shows that kingship involves duties that go beyond personal wishes. A ruler acquires responsibilities plus the position; holding political power does not entitle him to alter those duties as he pleases (Walshe 1995 DN 26) (Walshe, 1995, DN 26).

The term dhamma must be handled carefully. According to context, it can refer to teaching truth a norm, a quality, or an order of things. Translating it directly as constitutional law would settle the political question too quickly. In DN 26 it supplies a standard of rightful conduct and governance that the king is expected to honour. It does not designate a modern legal code enforced by an independent constitutional court. Norman's (1997) philological approach is relevant precisely because conceptual comparison depends on resisting the assumption that one English political term can capture every use of a Pāli word.

The interpretive claim remains substantial. When the king is depicted as subordinate to a standard he did not create, the highest office is not the ultimate source of moral validity. This prevents simply equating what is right with what is commanded. The ruler's orders may have practical force without automatically gaining moral authority just because they are royal. This distinction also changes the meaning of loyalty. Respect for an office does not necessarily mean approving everything its occupant does. Even without a developed doctrine of disobedience, the possibility of judging royal conduct independently of the ruler's wishes has political significance.

A counterargument is that such language may only embellish monarchy. The ruler can claim that he embodies dhamma, making moral elevation a means of insulating power. This possibility cannot be dismissed. Actually, the greater the symbolic unity between ruler and moral order, the more difficult dissent may become. The relevant distinction is between a standard that remains independently articulable and a standard monopolised by the ruler. DN 26's provision for seeking counsel suggests that the king is not self-sufficient in ethical knowledge. It does not but guarantee that counsellors can challenge him safely or that their advice will prevail.

5.2 Moral law and constitutional law

Law's language above the king can signal an authentic limit without creating constitutionalism in the demanding institutional sense. Constitutionalism also needs more than duties. It needs institutions that can render the design and use of powers as a matter of rules, with there being rules for identifying when rules have been broken. A king who learns that cruelty is wrong but who has the last say on every charge against himself is differently constrained from a public official who can be overruled by others. The difference is enforceability, not importance.

Gokhale's studies of kingship provide a basis for appreciating the normative qualifications of royal power (Gokhale, 1966). This analysis raises the additional question about the power of the practical criterion itself; who shall judge whether protection is right, whether resources are fairly distributed, whether force is excessive? If the ruler is always the final arbiter, the moralistic scope of limitation is threatened with self-justification. If religious experts assign the standard, their status and responsibility is in question. If the people are to decide, the procedure needs specification. The Nik ' aya tradition can offer no systematic determination of these options.

This is why only debating religion and law as wholly distinct spheres would be no answer: we find different institutional links between legal norms, the ruler

and religious institutions across Buddhist political regimes (Ginsburg & Schonthal, 2022). But, post-prescriptive diversity does not amount to one original Nikāya constitution: what matters here, for an article on governance, is way: how an institutional translation of a religious norm can function on different terms; how the appeal to protection might narrow an office or broaden it.

This distinction also prevents the assertion that lacking judicial institutions renders dhamma politically irrelevant. Norms can influence expectations, legitimize criticism, guide education, and shape the ruler's perception of his duties. They may affect conduct even without judicial enforcement. The challenge is reliability in unfavorable circumstances. A system that functions only when the ruler accepts correction cannot provide the same safeguards as one that remains effective if he resists. Moral authority and institutional control may reinforce each other, but their complementarity should not obscure their distinct roles.

5.3 Exemplary monarchy and the problem of succession

Such a perfect monarch is a good political dream. He demonstrates that power is not innately predatory and that matter is as well as authority. He enables us to criticise existing rule by highlighting the lacking qualities of the actions of current ones. The challenge posed by person-centred political projects remains: best of monarchs, the "state of quality" relies on the individual and the times of replacement. An effective sovereign does not carry the certainty that a replacement will develop similar virtues; the story of DN 26 foregrounds the effects of a breakdown in accountability and not the continuity of a virtuous kingship.

This introduces a helpful distinction between the continuity of an office and the continuity of justification. An office can be transferred regularly from one person to another, even as the reasons that make its exercise acceptable decline. The crown may remain; the standard of protection may not. That means, institutional stability alone does not suffice as a measure of legitimate rule. The reverse is also significant: changing the officeholder without addressing the practices that caused deprivation may leave the core issue unresolved. The text's focus on governing conduct allows for criticism that moves beyond both dynastic loyalty and the search for a single exemplary individual.

The account must not, in attempting to update the turning of the wheel, turn the monarch himself into a masked administrator of the modern world. His idiosyncrasy is part of a cosmological and soteriological realm where human morality, luck, and life are correlated. Collins (1998) allows us to retain this 'poetic' and 'religious' element of the account, and these would be wrong to expunge, but the political reading also remains. It is possible for a narrative to derive meaning from cosmological images and still make a meaningful judgement about royal neglect. The challenge is to distinguish the judgement from mythic time-schemes that are mistaken for social science.

The upshot is a form of kingship that is responsibility-limited but not adequately protected against its opposite. The king is not a moral agent. But the ability of the citizen to punish or reward him is not clearly defined. This is the accountability deficit par excellence; it should not be dismissed as a small absence that a vague call for virtue can supply. It pertains to the very realm of circumstances in which political limits are most urgent: the king, the ruler, who has renounced the duties that make his rule just.

POVERTY PUBLIC PROVISION AND THE FAILURE OF PUNITIVE GOVERNMENT

6.1 Deprivation as a political cause

DN 26's narration of decline links the deficiency of material supply with theft and further violence. The importance of this lies in the incorporation of deprivation into an account of political disorder. Wrongdoing is not simply attributed to 'bad character', but the ruler's neglect has helped generate conditions in which offences are more likely (without exempting those involved from blame), and the government is not because of this in a position to masquerade as a neutral party supplying an external fix for ills it has themselves fostered (Walshe 1995, DN 26) (Walshe, 1995, DN 26).

This profound divide between poverty as deprivation and poverty as chosen simplicity is central to Fenn's (1996) argument. A renouncer's relinquishment of possessions cannot be used to justify involuntary destitution among householders. The absence of wealth takes on different meanings according to agency, support, purpose, and social setting. Politically, the distinction prevents a damaging inference: that because spiritual life can value few possessions, rulers need not address hunger or material insecurity. Voluntary discipline within a sustaining community is not equivalent to being deprived of the means to support oneself and one's dependants.

Causal Progress there is no reason to think the causal progression in DN 26 should be taken as a count of effects. It doesn't say that all theft is caused by poverty, or that a rise in income will always lead to a reduction in violence. It just gives a value-based account of the sort of explanation that has a backward-looking effect: governmental neglect causes ensuing violence. Its significance for political science is not its claim that poor stimuli result in more punishments, but its insistence that government can't judge its performance by counting punishments and ignoring the deprivation that prompts them.

The story also disrupts a narrowly individualised notion of charity. Offering material aid following an offence is not equivalent to the state of affairs, which might enable us not to despair. A one-off payment will meet the needs of one individual, but set up expectations about how aid is accessed. From this analytical perspective provision must be an intelligible and adequate enough scheme. There is no promise of eligibility registers and welfare bureaucracies here but the inadequacy of episodic royal responses becomes perceptible. **Well-meaning** does not mean a coherent scheme of aid, and one-off responses lead to other complications.

6.2 The Kūṭadanta alternative

Further analysis from DN 5 supports this argument. In a discussion of sacrifice, the story urges productive assistance to various persons in different economic functions and adequate remuneration for those employed in the service of the king. Order is maintained through the provision of livelihoods, rather than by an increase in repression alone. The key contrast that is politically relevant is between the means of government: punishment deals with the effects of insecurity, support offers the incentives and conditions that cause insecurity in the first place. The story so is part of a religious narrative of sacrifice and of ethical superiority and should not be used as an autonomous administrative directive (Walshe 1995 DN 5) (Walshe, 1995, DN 5).

The particularised nature of differentiated help matters. The farms, the traders, the administrative officers do not have the same problems to face. A public response that overlooks that variety will be parity of treatment without functional effect. That then offers a principle upon which to specify the competence of government: it will turn give-and-take into something suitable for the activity in question. And it saves that welfare from being donated without discrimination. The political significance of the text lies in the relationship between social insight and intervention, although it does not provide the fact or institutional specifics for formulating a contemporary scheme.

Proper pay for officials raises yet another point. A government that demands service from public servants while failing to meet their material needs, jeopardizes its own effectiveness. This does not prove that higher wages will always avoid corruption. It does say that public virtue cannot be guaranteed solely through counsel and threat whenever the organisation of work creates a continual state of vulnerability or of obligation. The wider reconstruction is that the organisation of work is a contributing aspect of ethical administration; while responsibility is personal, it is enabled or inhibited by institutions and conditions.

The other non-cruelty of the story's sacrifice makes such costs appear over public: a monarch's prestige does not justify undergoing pain for show. In contemporary terms, one might wonder who pays the costs of an act that is said to profit the polity. The religious reinterpretation of the text reveals this concern without providing a "fiscal constitution" to guide it. It is useful in its capacity to redirect evaluation from the scale of the monarch's show to the impact of his or her show on entities with whom people have lived, that is, on "live things."

6.3 Welfare as an obligation and welfare as a right

A ruler's duty of provision and a subject's actionable claim to provision are related but different things. An obligation may be part of a paternalistic relationship in which the beneficiaries cannot stand on their rights to demand reasons or remedies. The Nikāya texts support claims of neglect: they do not yet make clear what means the deprived might have to compel the ruler to provide. Differentiating between them is important because a welfare monarchy can exist without challenge while still ameliorating material deprivation. The morality of provision should not mask the powerlessness of dependency.

Sen's (1999) concept of development as increasing substantive freedom offers a productive external contrast. Material deprivation is not only a threat to public order, but a real limitation on what people may do and be. The comparison shows a closeness and a distance. Nikāya welfare talk focuses on materiality, but its explicit politicking ties provision to security and moral health. A modern extension must consider whether people matter as agents in their own right. That extension needs a further case that they have standing.

Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach sharpens this point by directing attention to what each person is actually able to achieve. It should not be retroactively attributed to DN 5 or DN 26. Instead, it exposes a question that their welfare language leaves open: whose needs are visible, and through what process are neglected needs identified? A king may sincerely wish to provide for his subjects while misunderstanding the situation of women, subordinated workers, or socially excluded groups. Without channels through which those affected can speak, benevolence remains vulnerable to ignorance.

The problem of welfare and security so needs normative treatment. If the advocacy of provision hinges solely on Really poverty can disturb the rulers, then the conditions of inequality that do not – disturb the rulers should go unremedied. A more contemporary formulation would take protection from serious deprivation as the responsibility of public authorities even when that deprivation is not politically consequential. The Nikāya attack on neglect demands the first step but the universal position of recipients is a valuable contribution.

6.4 State capacity and restrained coercion

This argument also reframes the easy argument of more government versus less. Securing livelihoods might call for more capacity; curbing violence might call for restricting the form of capacity's application. A government that is too weak to secure the livelihoods of its people can simultaneously be too powerful in its punitive exertions. The Nikāya instruction promotes judgment by effect and outcome, not simply the amount of governance, until a capacity's components do not result in harms as they may be intended to curb.

Picture a government experiencing widespread theft during a crop failure. Increasing sanctions may achieve obedience in some instances yet not address the root cause of the threat. Offering aid may calm heightened fears but demands choices about distribution and administration. What the example shows is not that one strategy is always more effective than the other. It is that coercion cannot secure its rationale solely by citing violations when preventive action has not been taken. This example is a thought experiment, not a real experiment or historical program.

The two discourses so sustain an austere critique of punitive reductionism. They locate blame both up and down and add policy failure into the account of disorder.

They also remain vague about what goes into the 'decision-making' behind the distribution of responsibility. Their real force comes through when we view them as a set of standards, which govern actions are measured: a ruler who insists on obedience but whose gaze does not extend to everyday life has undermined his case. The question in turn is whether these moral boundaries of punishment and war provide any more complete checks on violence.

COERCION PUNISHMENT AND THE MORAL NON-EXEMPTION OF RULERS

7.1 Recognising force without sanctifying it

Early Buddhist political thought does not assume a society free from coercion. Kings maintain armies, apprehend offenders, and enforce punishments. The Aggañña story links the origin of official roles to responses against misconduct. So, it would be inaccurate in the end that the Nikāyas depict a political system without coercive measures. The more complex issue involves the ethical nature of coercive actions. Does holding public office turn an otherwise harmful deed into a positive one, or does the action remain open to moral evaluation regardless of its official context?

The article's principle of non-exemption addresses the second question. It is derived from the intersection of ethical guidance and stories about rulers, rather than being based on a single constitutional rule. While a government may have duties that private individuals do not, having those duties does not remove intention, suffering, or outcomes. This distinction is in particular relevant in traditions where a ruler's public role may be used to claim moral privilege. The Nikāya texts consistently place those in power within the same realm of ageing death ethical consequences, and vulnerability as everyone else.

The account of Ajātasattu in DN 2 offers a clear example. His royal status does not lessen the seriousness of killing his father. The discourse treats acknowledgment of wrongdoing as important, but does not present confession as fully erasing its effects. Political authority and religious opportunity exist alongside an unresolved moral barrier (Walshe 1995 DN 2) (Walshe, 1995, DN 2). Analytically, this is not a modern legal judgment about a king. Rather, it shows that being a ruler does not control how the ruler's actions are understood. An act may remain blameworthy even if the throne is retained.

It is relevant to theories of political necessity. A Sovereign might contend that severity is essential for the maintenance of order: necessity but needs investigation. Necessary for what? Needed in place of what? At whose expense? To what extent is the alleged public benefit distinct from private fear, wrath, or ambition? The Nikāyas do not provide this sequence as a legal test. It is modern elaboration of their argument against moralising power. It is helpful because it articulates a general moral objection, in questions that can reveal the corruption of that which is claimed to be publicly warranted.

7.2 Intention and the problem of public justification

Buddhist ethics also grants importance to intention. Though, theory alone will not provide a political theory entirely dependent on inaccessible inner motives. Subjects cannot be sure whether a ruler's motivation is compassion ambition resentment or some other combination. Nor can a ruler be sure the effect that a policy will have is what he expected it to be. For an understanding of the Buddhist approach to political morality see Keown (1992) and Harvey (2000). For present purposes the point to note is that in the Buddhist position no single element can be singled out and constitute, in itself, the basis for legitimacy.

And so an official's assertion of benevolent intention can never answer that question. Political judgement must assess what was in fact done, to whom, by what methods, and with what foreseeable effects. Where a government has caused significant damage while claiming good intentions, the claim to good intentions is itself a claim that must be subjected to scrutiny. We because of this confront a tension between moral cultivation and public accountability. Cultivation can boost judgement, but only accountability can function where cultivation is partial or deceptive. A political setup that substitutes a ruler's self-description for evidence would undermine the very moral assessment it seeks to protect.

The logic that constrains consequentialist shortcuts is the same: if order is the only standard, even very violent acts will be justified by a supposed future benefit. Yet, Nikāya criticisms of the harmful intention and deed contradict the idea that all means are means, or tools. Where the texts are short of a comprehensive, public doctrine of acceptable coercion in contexts of unavoidable conflict, it is preferable to simply say we have no clear doctrine and not to remedy the resulting uncertainty by importing either absolutist state necessity or a contemporary code of pacifism.

One might establish a presumption against harmful force without asserting the presence of the time writers' language of proportionality and least restrictive means. Such a presumption needs the actor, calling for harm, to justify why it is necessary and why less harmful means will not suffice. It is supported by the welfare stories that render preventive options more politically appealing. But this policy principle is an extrapolation across a range of textual topics, not one based on the trans-historical identification of a textually equivalent to modern administrative law.

7.3 Aṅgulimāla and the limits of punitive imagination

MN 86 contrasts the king's intention to suppress Aṅgulimāla with the transformation already brought about by the Buddha. The story allows for an outcome that the punitive mind-set had not foreseen: a dangerous offender can become someone whom armed repression no longer expects to confront. The king's response changes when he learns of this transformation. This demonstrates the narrative importance of transformation, but does not prove that religious conversion automatically removes liability in

general (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995 MN 86) (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995, MN 86).

A political reading must hold to the story's challenge while resisting a handwaving policy draw. The potential for change is important since an offender's first history is not dispositive of his potential. Yet, a public system must account for victims, trustworthy indicators of change, the well-being of others, and comparability from case to case all the formal safeguards a public system must adopt. The story does not furnish those safeguards. Endorsing through story that Christian converts in particular should be excepted from punishment would carry with it an inequality the story itself does not systematically analyse. The more appropriate conclusion is that the punitive policy should not assume that change is impossible.

That distinction becomes mainly significant: if the threat has disappeared, public interest in a protective response may no longer be justified. But desire to get even may continue long after its ostensible justification has diminished. The source encourages us to consider the difference. Today's version might ask whether the penalty alleviates the need, names public dissatisfaction, makes amends, or simply exhibits hatred. Those are the ways of categorizing a punishment, but today's source gives us motivation to consider, which is the way to look at it. It does not decide the point in advance.

This is an omission that must be addressed as a limitation. Religious accounts can focus on the spiritual accomplishment of the converted offender and still treat the need for those who were victimized as under articulated. Political-science accounts cannot allow that narrative to dominate the allocation of public concern. The security and right of victims would have to be explicitly asserted at the heart of any contemporary instantiation. Acknowledging it avoids a humane critique of punishment degenerating into apathy towards injury; the text leaves the door open to transformation, institutional justice must establish how that possibility can be acknowledged without creating impunity.

WAR CONQUEST AND THE INSECURITY OF VICTORY

8.1 Victory as a morally unstable achievement

These paired battle discourses, SN 3.14 and SN 3.15, free military victory from unconditional moral praise. The impact shifts from Pasenadi's confrontation with Ajātasattu and the criticisms that follow from them aimed at demobilization (away from enemies and allies) hostility revenge, and contingency of upsides. They do not necessarily imply that reader should see the victor as innocent; nor do they conflate defeat with ultimate virtuousness of the vanquished. Political luck is always something to be judged, not absolute (Bodhi 2000 SN 3.14–15) (Bodhi, 2000, SN 3.14–15).

In political theory, that seems to deprive us of a straightforward proposition linking success to legitimacy. Conquest might tell us who is in control, but it does not, in principle, validate the sovereign relationship. A victorious power cannot make an appeal from success to right and get away with it; nor does a vanquished power necessarily become undesirable if we get to hear it was defeated. The bifurcation is trivial, but it can be hard to see when power-pretensions are popularised. The Nikāyas' talking point makes most sense given a sensibility that accepts war as part of a king's life.

The political issue is also a matter of timing. A victory judged at the moment it occurs may seem advantageous, yet it can create resentment and lead to further violence. This points to the need for a longer-term perspective when assessing security. An arrangement that relies on repeatedly humiliating others may remain unstable, even if it achieves immediate compliance. The discourses do not provide a predictive model for international relations, and their observations should not be taken as evidence that every victory leads to a specific future conflict. Though, they do question the tendency to equate short-term military success with lasting peace.

The same argument can be directed at domestic domination. Any policy that stifles opposition may create an appearance of unity while increasing fear and resentment. The analogy is a heuristic rather than a direct claim about battle discourses; it follows from their focus on the relational consequences of winning and losing. A government interested in lasting order should consider whether its methods reduce hostility or simply suppress its expression. Moral and practical considerations are linked, though neither replaces the need for empirical evidence in a specific context.

8.2 The warrior’s profession and ethical responsibility

SN 42.3 is less understated in contradiction to this comfortable account of martial death. In SN 42.3, the hostile stance of the warrior towards others is not elaborated as spiritually redeemed thanks to social obligation or heroic convention; SN 42.3 As a result involves a critique of the normative morality of military action and doesn't condone the mouthful of professional mythology (Bodhi 2000 SN 42.3) (Bodhi, 2000, SN 42.3). The political lesson isn't the match of the institutional choices for soldiers and kings; it's the idea that a socially prized role doesn't automatically confirm the morality of that role's intent and fact.

This creates a tension that the reader should recognize. Government is expected to protect people, but the usual means of protection may involve threats or force that conflict with ethical ideals. This tension should not be resolved by claiming that the texts secretly approve any violence done for a good cause, nor by assuming they offer a detailed alternative security system. Part of their value lies in refusing to provide moral comfort. Political necessity, if it exists, may remain tragic or ethically costly rather than being made entirely pure by official approval.

A contemporary just-war approach separates criteria for going to war from restrictions during war. The passages discussed do not set up that difference. They seem more relevant with the intentions behind, the pain caused by, the retaliation for, and the overestimation of victory in war. Comparative analysis can still be illuminating if it can detect that in certain circumstances merely having public

sanction for war and a purportedly defensive aim may not be enough to alleviate the moral cost of killing. A Buddhist-inspired political argument would then have to account for how that cost bears on the obligation to defend people against attack. The present study does not claim that an uncontested standard answer resolves every case.

AN 5.177 declaring particular trades to be contrary to the practices of lay followers penetrates the ethical gaze into the world of economic activity, including the trade in weapons. It does not spell out a modern procurement policy, and its addressees should not be quietly countermanded by a modern ministry. It does but preclude the analysis of violence from stopping at the person who deals the deathblow. Economic involvement can continue to help violence when those involved are physically remote from the scene of action (Bodhi 2012 AN 5.177) (Bodhi, 2012, AN 5.177). Its modern analogue must be a matter of chain responsibilities, while its institutional delineation is to be established.

8.3 Protection without a politics of glorification

A polity can have this kind of defensive capacity without elevating the gathering and exhibition of violent power into its greatest accomplishment. This is one way of keeping alive the pragmatic seriousness of politics in the Nikāya critique of conquest. It makes no assumption that every danger can be neutralized by virtue. It only insists that the instruments of protection may not themselves become objects of collective reverence. The destructive capacity remains a dangerous tool whose justification depends on how it is related to the people and things it has to protect.

This idea also explains the necessity of Moral Restrictions on victorious governments. The best point of a regime may be in situations where it is hardest to criticise it. Respect service intimidation and "necessity" can be used to insulate a ruler from criticism. An independent standard of action has great political value, for it stops "victory" from being an exculpation in retrospect and in the same breath admits that results count, that saving a city or putting an end to a war is not a licence for any action.

The question of who interprets restraint remains unresolved. By the rules, a ruler can describe any expansion as protection and any opponent as a threat. Moral language alone cannot prevent such descriptions. This is also why the article separates justificatory criteria from institutional constraints: the war passages provide reasons to distrust glorification and exemption from criticism. A modern political order could include independent information, public scrutiny, and procedures for reviewing security claims. These too are compatible with the reconstructed critique but are not fully specified by the discourses themselves.

The position on offer is not an assertion of state force, nor even an assertion that political communities face threats. Rather it is an assertion that threat does not pre-empt all reasoning. The more devastatingly consequential the force, the greater the political science burden of justification (the claim to victory does nothing to ease the burden), and victories do not release that burden. A position such as this can inform political science, by undermining legitimacy accounts that predicate legitimacy too heavily on successful defence and while not thinking about the ways in which defence is made and the external costs and long-term relationships in which this is embedded.

ASSEMBLY CONCORD AND THE LIMITS OF DEMOCRATIC INTERPRETATION

9.1 The Vajjian conditions of non-decline

DN 16 raises the question on the Vajjis when talking about Ajātasattu planning to attack them; the answer speaks of their preparations to sustain strength: meeting regularly, for common affairs, for friendliness, for pursuits per what is good, for protection from forcible entry of women, for honor of sacred places, and for assisting holy men. The political flavour is clear, but the nature of the answer needs to be clarified: these are conditions for collective non-decline, not an explicit assurance of individual equality (Walshe 1995 DN 16) (Walshe, 1995, DN 16).

Meeting politically regular meeting is implicitly political because the public sphere is not presented as the private property of a single ruler. There must be moments at which members gather and work together over shared issues to effect collective action. But the mere existence of an assembly doesn't reveal the set of people who were assemblies, who weren't, and whichif anywere hierarchical, exclusionary, and/or worked to disenfranchise some of those who were eligible to speak. The praise of meeting in the text should be taken as an argument for the merits of collective organized activity, not definitive proof of equal access to political voice.

Concord is Like that ambiguous. It can refer to the ability to conduct shared business without destructive fragmentation. It can also be invoked to suppress disagreement if treated as a demand that dissent disappear. The discourse does not offer a theory of protected opposition or a procedure for resolving persistent disagreement among equals. A contemporary interpretation should as a result distinguish deliberative cooperation from enforced unanimity. Agreement can be politically valuable, but a polity's legitimacy cannot be inferred simply from the absence of visible conflict.

The same rule also carries a silver lining. Stability of practice prevents the community from capricious change or opportunistic exploitation. Yet it also means that cooperation is foreseeable, for security can rest on the past. Continuing practices will either continue some order or continue systems of exclusion; respect for continuity merely does not tell us, which of these events merit preservation. Again, the inability of the Nikāya to do the latter is not a fault peculiar to Buddhists: it simply is a good example of what is a very general problem for all appeals to tradition in politics.

9.2 Collective endurance and political legitimacy

But the condition for political survival is not a sufficient condition for just government. A close oligarchic order can survive while disenfranchising the bulk of its population. A broad government however could be

seriously threatened from abroad. If we interpret D N 16 as political theory, we must preserve the residual distinction between these assessments. Concern with non-decline supplies powerful reasons for observing a collective, order's, institutions, and social fabric; it does not amount to a conclusion that any stable collective order is just.

Women should be protected from forcible taking mainly. It has political importance, as a limit on rapaciousness and as a matter of social concern. It does not yet secure equality of political standing, independent legal autonomy in every area, or a general theory of sex equality. The protection can go hand-in-glove with paternalistic beliefs about those it protects. The text should acknowledge the prohibition on harm and yet refuse to equate protection with participation. The new developments today need to consider whether women can identify their own interests and resist the institutions supposedly protecting them.

In emphasizing the significance of the authority of elders, the discourse invites reflection on the relation of expertise and power. Expertise may protect institutions against loss of memory and unlearned past losses; neglect of learned as well as learned lessons tends to be deeply damaging. But seniority does not mean infallibility. Enough that respect for elders covers challenge, a resource for preservation threatens a resource for correction. The discourse supplies raw material for thought about generational authority, but in a modern democracy will need to supply norms for when the experience should rule and when inherited judgement should be sensibly questioned.

Jayasuriya (2008) highlights similarities between Buddhist statecraft and contemporary political principles. Drawing such parallels can highlight untapped resources, assuming it doesn't equate similarity with identity. This reading concedes that consultation, regular assembly, public responsibility, and non-predation are relevant to democratic ideas, but stops short of claiming that their concurrence brings a thorough-going democratic doctrine. What is lacking is the equal dignity of all adults, competitive allocation of authority, safeguarded opposition, and an explanation of how group preferences are imposed upon dissenters.

9.3 From assembly to deliberation

But deliberation is not just a large gathering. It involves reasons, not only giving reasons, but also challenging proposals, listening, and influencing decisions when disagreement is not made punitive. Gatherings may be simply ritualistic, oppressive, or mono-centric. DN 16's focus on collective practices initiates a question about the political significance of assembly but we cannot simply assume that for DN 16 the practice is good. This suggests an essential limit of the argument that Buddhist life is necessarily democratic.

Peter (2008) renders epistemic proceduralism as an external question: what justification is there to turn to procedures when under disagreement? This question shifts the focus from the supposed correct way of reasoning of one participant, towards the reasoners involved in the organisation of the enquiry. Used conversely, a potential implication of it for the constructive use of debate is that discussions should entail avenues for identifying errors as well as examining common goals. (The original does not make Peter's account explicit. The comparison shows one way how concern with collective practice might have been extended if I had taken due regard to equal public standing explicitly.)

An example of the issue. A body in which regular meetings are held, but in which the chair cannot be challenged, may be maintained and well-organized, but that is politically closed. A body may be riven with disputes but be governed by explicit procedures for protest against proposals, modiication of proposals, and termination of decision-making. The first meets a minimal condition of a gathering; the second implements the ideal of deliberative responsibility to a greater extent. The Nikāya passage does not help choose between these kinds of contemporary institution.

The conclusion so bears a qualification. DN 16 offers one version of the political resilience in which assembly, continuity, non-predation, and social respect all count. It offers a significant challenge to the presumption of a royal monopoly as the only guarantee of a well-functioning state. But it does not create a straightforward textual dilemma of Buddhist democratism versus non-Buddhist monarchism. Several political forms are positively described in the corpus, which frequently focuses on behaviour and conditions for well-being rather than a distinctive constitutional minimum.

SOCIAL HIERARCHY MORAL STANDING AND UNEQUAL CITIZENSHIP

10.1 Criticism of inherited superiority

MN 84 & 93 weaken claims of bramanical superiority, and cast doubt through discussions of action potential social relatedness, and effect. These arguments are politically significant in undermining the notion that born status alone is criteria for moral judgment, since the gross layering of wealth service suffering, and reputation cannot be explained simply as bearing equally pure and impure individuals. They undermine the presumption of any all-embracing ideology of birth, though neither text outright calls for the immediate abolition of all social groups (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995 MN 84, MN 93) (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995 MN 84, MN 93) (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995, MN 84, MN 93).

But the difference between moral status and citizenship is crucial. If all members of different groups are capable of a good and bad life and of spiritual perfection, then inherited rank cannot alone establish the exclusive possession of moral capacity. But identical capacity for moral growth does not necessarily mean identical weighting of votes, or equal access to political office, or the end of inherited economic advantage (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995, MN 90). Those results need further premises about the organisation of public power. An adequate interpretation needs to identify the bridge, not assume it.

Chakravarti's (1987) social analysis is useful in that it refuses to describe the early Buddhist community as if it were a space beyond hierarchical ranking. Religious critique can destabilize a justificatory hierarchy without

necessarily repudiating social reliance and particularity of status. This is not to say that religious critique is that means valueless, but the effect of the critique and the limits on that effect are questions requiring analysis. The importance of an argument in the political field cannot be exhausted by the argument's immediate transition to a modern egalitarian regime.

MN 90 supports an alternative view, linking variations in spiritual attainment to appropriate qualities and effort rather than taking social category as a fundamental obstacle. The courtly environment also diminishes the king's intellectual mastery through allowing for relatively weak and limited knowledges and through reducing him to the inbox of messages, advice, and news, which may be false (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995 MN 90). The final underlying assumption is that social strength and moral and mental skill are conceptually independent and that any political approach to superiority would be challenged from the Nikāyas.

10.2 Reciprocity and the persistence of asymmetry

DN 31 also recognizes mutual obligations within all household and social relationships, in particular the relationship of employer or master to worker or servant. This reciprocity is significant: the relationship of dominant to subordinate does entail human duty, but it does not treat power as 'justified privilege.' It yet remains a hierarchy, not an equality. In reality mutual duties are present does not imply that the parties are equally able to bargain or to walk away (Walshe 1995 DN 31) (Walshe, 1995, DN 31). This is another example of how a morally valid hierarchy is not the same as a legally secured equality.

In political science the question is whether reciprocity offers a solution to the problem of one side defaulting. It may be that the worker has a duty of diligence and the employer has a duty of care, but the outcome of not performing may be completely different. If only the more powerful party can punish breaches, then at the level of moral description there is reciprocity but not universally coercible reciprocity. A test case today would ask: who has a standing to complain? What sorts of evidence are permitted? Does the principle of non-retaliation apply? Such questions cannot be addressed simply by listing virtues that are mutual.

The same structure is found in paternalistic monarchy. A king offers protection and provision; subjects acknowledge his authority and sustain the polity. This arrangement can be preferable to predation, but it may still leave those governed reliant on the ruler's judgement. Reciprocal expectations are politically valuable because they allow for criticism when obligations are unmet. The system becomes more accountable only when the weaker party can invoke these expectations through effective procedures. The article's thesis emphasises the distinction between ethical reciprocity and institutional reciprocity.

This also falls into the trap of setting up a false opposition between the equality of today and the hierarchy of bygone times. Modern institutions may assert equal rights, but it does not follow that people are always in a position to invoke them. Our history should not be romanticized to the modern side. And yet, the failure of modern democracies does not necessarily imply that the obligations to which we are subject are in fact rights we can enforce. Both worlds provide criteria by which to judge, and modern constitutional structures mechanisms by which to do so – and whether they work in practice remains to be seen.

10.3 Universal concern and the boundaries of the political community

SN 3.8 proceeds from each person's concern for themselves towards a reason for not harming others. It challenges us to extend our moral concern beyond the ruler's, narrow, self-interests, or parochial group affiliations (Bodhi 2000, SN 3.8) (Bodhi, 2000, SN 3.8). Its political significance is that the powerless of others are not dispensable just because they are outside one's range of benefit. But there is no indication in the passage as to what terrritorial citizenship, migration rights, or political inclusion in a democratic public involves.

A state may in fairness focus on some members over outsiders. The Nikāya stress on non-harming constrains views that regard outsiders as morally irrelevant. But it stops short of the full development of a theory of borders and redistribution that directs how states should treat outsiders. The most plausible reading is that means that the public purposes of the Nikāya cannot be understood as removing these individuals from moral consideration. This is a limit on political reasoning, not an off-the-shelf global constitution, and it demands from modern readers the ability to acknowledge external harms while refraining from reading cosmopolitan institutions into the ancient text.

Issues of gender and social dependence also persist. The ethical resources of the corpus underpin the critique of exclusion, but the institutionalisation is imperfect. There needs to be an explicit statement that contemporary Buddhist political theory is committed to equal citizenship and how it does so by developing the sources. This cannot be pinned on the claim that spiritual equality already resolves all political problems. That honesty makes the theory stronger by permitting the extra premises to be argued over, rather than having them protected behind the authority of Canon.

The conclusion of this section so has double effect: The Nikāyas, while subverting the powerful rationalizations of the moral superiority of origins and of the imposition of duties across asymmetrical relations, because of this provide powerful tools for critique of domination. They do not though usually convert that critique into a blueprint of equal political standing (with enforcement of the redistribution) of the social superstructure it inherits. That is the reason why a third-century BCE Buddhist moment may be both ethically radical and institutionally conservative.

RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND THE INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGEMENT

11.1 Neither identity nor complete separation

Political and religious authority is present in interaction in the Nikāyas. Kings come to see the Buddha,

patronise the order consult appear as persons in need of correction. This cannot define the boundaries of a modern secular state or theocratically defined person of the state and the teaching. Their correlation might be better characterized as different capacities. The king offers the resources and instruments of power. The teacher gives the teaching about behaviour and liberation.

The political significance of the distinction lies in opening up the chance of judgement not derived from royal authority. A king may be very august and yet in need of guidance. The teacher's power is not expressed as in royal appointment; the course of instruction is not merely contingent on the king's sanction. But we should be cautious about romanticising an autonomous capacity for judgement by lumping it all together as mere autonomy. Religious groups rely on patronage, and are embedded in social contexts that may exert pressures. Bailey and Mabbett (2003) are in particular helpful in integrating early Buddhism into its social context.

Patronage this way has a mixed political shape. It may allow for religious observance and keep an arena of judgement beyond the state. It may foster dependency, the opportunity to flatter, and the chance for the ruler to use the prestige of religion. Having access to royal generosity does not tell us that this is the dominant effect; nor does it mean that a text portraying a positive meeting was necessarily an exception. It is the effect of dependence on the ability to speak truthfully that is the issue.

Tambiah's (1976) work shows the historical significance of the conjunction between the world-conquering king and the renouncer. What is of interest here is the existence of a tension, and also a harmony. A king can maintain the conditions of renunciation, even as renunciation reveals the shallow attainments of kingship. That relationship can circumscribe the swollen sense of the king's own importance, but it can also be a resource of legitimacy. It depends upon whether religious power maintains the capacity to judge the king, or becomes simply a decorative element of kingship.

11.2 Rule-governed community in MN 108

Much the same as for the charismatic claim, MN 108 offers a further nuance to the personal. Ānanda uses communal fidelity to wisdom and discipline for ordering the community, not a single stand-in for the Buddha. The narrative highlights communal discipline and offences being viewed through the lens of a code. Reverence to honour-bings is maintained without the elevation of one individual as the all-in-all (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995, MN 108). (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995 MN 108).

This is significant to political theory in that it shows an abstract separation of individual virtue from persistently governed association. An extraordinary teacher's death may not oblige the creation of an extraordinary sovereign. Norms and procedures may have authority over and above the individual who created them. But the setting of the religious community involves a specific purpose and membership requirement. It would be mistaken to assume that all the monasteries procedures were meant to work as the constitution for a territorial state. Passage because of this offers a point of comparison, not an automatic transfer rule.

This distinction is crucial for understanding the accountability deficit in royal government. The corpus offers positive evidence that collective life governed by rules is imaginable. The meagre articulation of public controls over kings is not easily dismissed by the statement that early Buddhists could only picture personal authority. Instead, a more accurate statement is that various types of authority are officially treated differently; monastic rule and the royal regime are not known for the same range of procedures, and we cannot generalize procedures in one domain.

A more modern reconstruction might inquire whether the authority-in-the-rules argument extends to this example of a voluntary religious communal order. This extension would demand in this case an accounting of inclusion, coercion, jurisdiction, and exit. A monastery and a state apply their power over different domains and to different numbers of affected persons. The social conditions of monastic entry may pose difficulties of exit even if entry into a monastic order is voluntary. The parallel should this way focus on what it does (the functions served) rather than assume the result (democracy).

11.3 The problem of religious guardianship

If the religious teachers then have a right to assess kings, should they have a right to overrule them? The Nikāya texts we have studied on the mode of appointment do not seem to supply a complete constitutional solution: ethical/ spiritual stature does not entail competency in every area of management, and spiritual stature does not tell us how disagreement among experts should be managed. Merely to transfer the problem of unaccountable power from kings to priests would not seem to get us anywhere.

The same problem arises with the protection of religion. A state could claim to be protecting a tradition, while also reserving the right to determine the form that tradition should take. Anyone who fails to accept this can be accused of undermining the very good that the state claims to uphold. Schonthal (2016) makes a contemporary warning about the challenges of establishing a Buddhist state in showing how constitutional preference can bring disputes about what the state's religion is and where its limits lie. It is not evidence about the history of institutions. It shows why the transition from religious norm to state obligation needs political dissection.

Rawls's (1993) political liberalism articulates a problem, not the solution: "whether and how coercive agencies...might be justified for citizens who, reasonably, and in good faith, may hold conflicting comprehensive doctrines." The Nikāyas do not articulate what we call public reason. Yet, their critique of misdeed and deprivation can be put in language that is intelligible even to those who do not share belief in rebirth. Today's commentator might advocate for protection, non-cruelty, and provision without insisting that all citizens endorse a comprehensive view of rebirth. This sort of translation maintains a difference between a tradition's reasons for preferring a policy and public reasons for imposing it.

This difference does not mean that religion must be politically silent. Religions, after all, can produce critique, moral prod, and visions of the good life. The question is whether their claims in the public sphere can be challenged and whether non-exempt persons and groups enjoy equal footing. Any extension of the nonexemption concern in the article would not give religious authorities a free pass from the political critique. If kings must answer for their bad deeds and follow their office's duty, religious agents should not escape the political critique because they cite a teaching. The bigger question is about status-based moral insulation.

EPISTEMIC RESTRAINTS AND THE CORRECTION OF POLITICAL ERROR

12.1 The limits of the ruler's knowledge

Political power relies on information not often available to officeholders: a ruler is informed by reports advisers middlemen, or socially curated experience. Officeholders' power can distort those sources: information may be suppressed, consensus fabricated, or sycophants quoted to tell the ruler what he is supposed to think. The courtly scene of MN 90 makes that general point transparent, but we do not get a general account of bureaucratic intelligence. The political lesson: the elevated status of an office should never be taken as a sign of the holder's complete knowledge. The broadening sphere of power boosts the potential impact of informational failure.

This complicates an almost ideal image of benevolent monarchy. A good intention can be held together with an inaccurate understanding of the demographically restive population. The ruler may believe that provision will do the trick because the government officials have spoken as if it will, and because the worst-affected are shut out of the court. Ethical judgement so demands more than a generous spirit; it calls for institutions or practices, which reveal error. The Nikāya terminology of vigilant inspection may provide the resources for understanding what this requirement entails, but it does not identify the public institutions needed to gather and test information.

This problem is not solved with wise counselors. Advisers can disagree, count on the king's favour, or be poorly informed. A political mechanism must show how the weighing of claims can be resolved, and how knowledge from beyond the circle of authority can be integrated into the weighing. This is the point at which receiving of information that the listener does not wish to hear becomes a problem of institutional design: the capacity to hear inconvenient truths must be conceived of as a property of a process of government, rather than simply as a virtue of individual advisers. Otherwise correction becomes impossible when the ruler resists and the adviser is cut off.

Hurd's (1999) analysis of authority and legitimacy in international politics illustrates the difference between rightfulness and pressure or self-interest as motivation. On this research question the comparison demonstrates an epistemic danger: acquiescence can be confused with recognition. A sovereign buffered by compliant behaviour might believe the authority is accepted when in fact it is fear that is inspiring compliance. Political dissent is so an information to rulers and others, because free opportunities for disagreement are the way to learn what the governed actually think.

12.2 AN 3.65 and the limits of doctrinal certainty

AN 3.65 addresses the doubts that arise from the teachers who disagree. It guides us towards the moral nature and effects of greed, hatred, and delusion and their evaluation by the wise. It does not advise people to take preference as an infallible guide, nor does it suggest a modern scientific approach. AN 3.65 is relevant because it excludes authority, popularity, or sincerity from being reasons to settle a claim (Bodhi 2012 AN 3.65) (Bodhi, 2012, AN 3.65).

The political extension is simple and not very powerful: no official assertion must, of course, be sheltered from challenge and scrutiny simply because it has been passed down by many, or because someone knows they heard this or that celebrity say it. But using the discourse politically necessarily involves scale and evidence; citizens of course cannot test all effects of policies personally, and effects must have some latency and distribution to allow for systematic assessment. Discourse and modes of scrutiny will have to take institutions of inquiry and honest intermediary as given. The ethical orientation of the text makes this more likely, but does not do away with the need for experts and does not specify complete procedures for choosing them.

The mention of the wise muddy waters for an individualistic reading. Judgement is not presented as entirely divorced from those who know. But also, a reference to a person being wise cannot end that investigation if the (disputed) attribution is itself problematic. We need criteria for expertise, independence, and revision in the present-day polity; the nikāya passage advocates the evaluation of harmful qualities and effects, but the polycentric community needs also to face the question of how that evaluation is brought to public view.

MN 95 also draws out a distinction between the grounds of making a belief and the necessarily true conclusion. It is said to foster "meticulous relationship to conviction and investigation that is consistently at odds with the assumption that initial self-assurance amounts to knowledge" (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995 MN 95) (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995, MN 95). Politically, this would engender a disciplined and pragmatic exercise of power when the situation is not clear, for a polity that states what it does not know is less likely to fall prey to blind correction than one that seems to mistake correction for treason. This is a good conclusion, for that is precisely where the hermeneutic strays; it is focused on the argument for religious verity and for the teacher.

12.3 From personal reflection to public revisability

The working-out of the injunction in MN 61 to consider acting before, during, and after the act gives a kind of time-structure for ethical reflection. Actions are judged

based on potential or actual harm, and when established as wrong, it demands recognition and forbearance (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995 MN 61) (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995, MN 61). A political reading could suggest future judgement, ongoing judgement, and retrospective evaluation. This is a valuable exercise because policies are rarely defended definitively. Changing circumstances, unanticipated consequences, and evidence that an action is damaging can all come to light.

The analogy should not obscure the differences between individual action and collective administration. A public decision involves distributed responsibility, institutional incentives, and numerous affected individuals. An official cannot fulfill accountability merely by privately regretting an error. Public revision may require explanation restitution procedural adjustments, and the correction of inaccurate records. These steps extend beyond the immediate textual instruction, but they maintain its emphasis that acknowledged harm should influence future actions. Ethical reflection gains political strength when it is linked to duties that others can call upon.

Buchanan and Keohane (2006) advocate standards of legitimacy that comprise, among other things, the facilities of criticism and enhancement in institutions that manage disagreement. Their realm is the world, not early Buddhism, but their focus on revisability extends the analysis to an institutional dimension that remains absent. A government need not be ever infallible to be legitimate. It does need some convincing mechanism by which it can identify and rectify major blunders.

The resulting modern principle is public corrigibility. It needs those in control to be accountable to evidence, reasons, and the experiences of the objects of their control. Not words at all in the Nikāyas, and not an ancient institution we have reconstructed, it is a new member of their arsenal for generating standards of behavior and constraining willfulness. Its strength is that it turns an ethic into a kind of institution. Its importance confirms my larger argument: moral insight can't free us from contemplating the forms that would constrain personal insight.

RENUNCIATION MORTALITY AND THE LIMITED IMPORTANCE OF POLITICS

13.1 Political goods without political ultimacy

A theory can treat government as necessary without declaring political success the supreme end of human life. The Nikāyas constantly arrange worldly success when talking about a more general account of discontent, anicca, and salvation. This approach does not, of course, negate political accountability. It simply puts political goods into a lower hierarchy. Security, wealth, and social harmony can constitute support for good lives without being able to end up to offer ultimate salvation on the religious path. Gethin (1998) sketches out the doctrinal setting in which this ordering of priorities makes sense.

Moore (2016) stresses the insubstantiality of politics in Buddhism in great detail. This is helpful as it questions readings of all traditions as defined by the degree to which they 'uphold citizenship.' Insubstantiality should but not be taken to mean insignificance. Even a political setup that is subordinate to salvation can Sure determine whether people have nourishment and protection and leisure and practicing opportunities. The article further separates absolute priority from relative pressingness. A need not be absolute to entail important duties for those who give access to it.

This difference can be illustrated without resorting to the modern state as the ultimate object of devotion. Shelter does not constitute the ultimate human good, but without shelter, many higher pursuits are impossible. Nor must a political order necessarily deliver people from every form of suffering, while its inability to do so leaves them exposed to violence and deprivation. The Nikāya welfare passages make sense within this relation. They need not be repositioned as secular exceptions to a religious world-view. Their focus on quotidian circumstances can be compatible with, and should not be understood as a rejection of, the achievement of prosperity.The political peril comes when this ranking of goods justifies the abandonment of other people's misery. Someone who is able to abandon might overlook the plight of the someone who lacks a stable livelihood to abandon. An administrator might recommend dispassion but withhold advantages from those to whom dispassion is taught. A critical reconstruction must inquire who is arguing that we need fewer politics, and whom that costs. Renunciation may curb the aspirations of the powerful, but it can also serve to dissuade the powerless from mounting resistance to unnecessary suffering.

13.2 Mortality as a criticism of sovereign self-importance

SN 3.25 has another warning to Pasenadi about death and old age with the picture of mountains too much to handle. Warfare, riches, and the meanness of intelligence cannot free the king of this fate that applies to everyone living. The religious note is the focus on good behavior and the political message is – to not think any longer about being king as special life master (Bodhi 2000 SN 3.25) (Bodhi, 2000, SN 3.25). The king may be omnipotent, but only so to a point.

The significance of this vulnerability is conceptual rather than practical. Power does not allow a ruler to be a 'be-ing' for which others – or their interests – are fundamentally not as real. The ruler might be more frightened or more attached because he is more powerful, but his power does not overcome the conditions under, which care, and the limits of care, are seen as intelligible. Mortality is so a check on the hyper-royal self-aggrandisement; it does not generate an electoral process, but it can undermine a language by which the ruler's glory defines all worth.

The argument further relativizes accumulation. Since neither wealth nor conquest can guarantee ultimate security, a relentless drive for expansion loses one of the stories used to justify it. This does not argue for giving up public goods, for ideas of preparedness; it is an acknowledgment that supply is necessary while the illusion persists that more control can eliminate risk. A political order founded on that illusion may ask for its citizens to

sacrifice endlessly without promising to allay the fear that inspires them; the Nikāya would have us critique that promise.

But there is also a limit to existential critique. A sovereign may concede mortality and still act unjustly. Mortality by itself does not spontaneously produce solidarity; for a creature who is vulnerable in the same ways as everyone else, it may just as easily produce more fear and dominance as lesser fear and domination. If the political argument of mortality alone is to carry its own weight, it cannot simply be existential; it must appeal to an ethic that links one's own vulnerability to the lives of others, and to institutional rules that also limit our destructive choices. The article offers a powerful challenge to sovereign arrogance, but that challenge will have a greater or lesser effect, based on how it is received.

13.3 Not-self and the risks of political deduction

SN 22.59 considers the aggregates as an unfit basis for a realizable or manipulable self. Here too the question is release via wisdom, not a theory of constitutional or existential identity (Bodhi 2000 SN 22.59) (Bodhi, 2000, SN 22.59). The doctrine can undermine clinging to condition and ownership, but political inferences cannot be inferred directly from it without appeal to other assumptions. The lack of a permanent metaphysical self alone is not enough to justify democracy, anarchism, collectivism, or the elimination of legal personality.

Collins (1982) is an important commentary on this point because the notion of no-self should be understood for Buddhist philosophy, not as a modern slogan for no man is an island. Persons may be held accountable for their actions, and protected in their personhood, without the assumption of a permanent substance. A denial of metaphysical permanence should not lead to a diminution in the reality of suffering or the obligation to do something about it. Political reading of the doctrine of no-self, which de-personalizes Buddha's followers would detract from its moral relevance.

The softer political lesson is the attachment to office and identity. A ruler whose state is part of an inviolable self may see criticism as an injury to the state, too; a community that treats its identity as demanding perpetual dominance will see equality as humiliating. Buddhist reflection can help us analyze such attachments. Still, we should welcome the correction of contemplative diagnosis by political institutions; political theorists have work to do, showing how practices and rules can ease the negatives of attachment without presuming all citizens will eventually have insight.

Renunciation by consequence restricts politics in two ways. It denies the assumption that political achievement is the only human achievement, and it brings a perspective that questions rulers' pursuits. Neither restriction of scope frees politics from the need to govern. The most justifiable reconstitution is a politics that fully assumes responsibility, but denies political absolutism. For the state to provide the circumstances in which human well-being is maximized and assured is necessary, but it has no right to require that all human aims fit within those plans. The limitation of scope is one of the tradition's unique contributions to comparative political theory.

A RECONSTRUCTED FRAMEWORK OF CONDITIONAL LEGITIMACY

14.1 Five grounds for evaluating authority

The textual analysis identifies five connected bases for assessing political authority. The first is functional authorisation: an office should be defined by the public issues it is meant to address, not by any inherent superiority of its occupant. The second is protective responsibility: power ought to shield people from exploitation and prevent unnecessary insecurity. The third is material responsibility: government should not disregard deprivation when maintaining order or blame those affected while overlooking its own failures. The fourth is ethical restraint: holding office, achieving victory, or acting out of necessity does not automatically justify harmful actions. The fifth is openness to correction: authority should stay open to judgement and knowledge beyond the preferences of those in power.

These grounds are not presented as a single list in any one sutta. Instead, they are reconstructed in this article from related sources. Their provisional status should remain clear. The structure is justifiable if it helps clarify relationships among passages without overlooking differences or introducing unsupported institutions. Yet, it would be misleading to present it as a recovered constitutional code. The main contribution is conceptual: it clarifies what makes a claim to rule more or less defensible within the chosen textual context and points out the institutional questions that this context leaves unresolved.

But the grounds are not also mechanically additive. A ruler cannot offset unlimited cruelty, or make it benign, by a more generous distribution of goods. And appeals to the origins of the state are not sufficient to remove all criticisms of subsequent conduct. Some criticisms are directed at a mode of government, others at its ends, or its relationship to the ruled. It challenges the view that legitimacy is a single number resting on addition of qualities that are not simply cumulatively good.

So, one can discriminate the standard to which evaluation is made from the criterion of judgement. The state's performance may have outstripped the target or its willingness to receive crit- ical comment may have increased, but it still does not meet all of the conditions of legitimacy. Gross predation or sustained violence may also negate the state's right to govern. The Nikāyas do not suggest a cut-off point at which authority is considered formally vacated, nor does this article invent one.

14.2 The accountability deficit

The key institutional difference here is between an external regularity and an answerability to people empowered to call it to account. An autocrat can be answerable to higher principles, but not to his subjects, if they have no authority to criticize, rectify, or displace him. Nikāya stories usually show up a guide who detects evil or a norm to compare to the ruler, but not what people do in

the absence of the former or when the latter is compromised.

Four questions help analyse the deficit. Who may bring a complaint? What information must the power reveal? Who determines whether an abuse of power has happened? What is the outcome if the ruler will not be corrected? There is no answer in the chosen corpus to these questions for monarchy in the general sense. Finding out what the questions are would not in itself be anachronistic; the anachronism would be to find that they are answered in the same way as a modern constitution is answered. The questions expose the limits of the claim that I set for the reconstruction.

Adversity makes this harder to see in the imaginary case of a king who ostentatiously performs dhamma and bestows liberally on distinguished religious leaders as a cover for ordering officials to hide deprivations, moral values survive; benevolence seems immediate; ritual powers are proven; so individuals might have no instruments of public redress. An ideological analysis measuring the document against the ruler's inaugural affirmations will not see domination. The Nikāya standards will criticize the stifled deprivation but need a secondary institutional level of power to make the critique work.

This is why we cannot explain the system as (merely) proto-liberal constitutionalism. The prefix may conceal rather than clarify: it risks masking an eventuality as an inevitability. The texts provide resources, which may be made constitutional and resources, which uphold moralized hierarchies. They are open so that is historically and philosophically important: our present political commitments cannot simply be assumed on the strength of a statement of fidelity to the canon; each interpretation must argumentatively fill the canon out.

14.3 Three failures of legitimation

The first failure is functional reversal. Power garnered for public benefit turns into a threat or income gathered for purposes of public service benefits the ruler's own benefit. This failure is apparent in the relation of office and purpose. The failure does not have to wait for evidence that all acts of government are damaging. The systematic re-channeling of public capacity is sufficient to undermine justification where everyday administration proceeds. The functional aspect of the Aggañña story takes on particular significance in the sphere of recognition of reversal.

The second problem is what might be called moral exceptionalism. The ruler produces the claim that formal religious martial or emergency conditions make his conduct irresponsible. The sources in this study challenge precisely such claims by continuing to observe intention, suffering, and result. This failure may be present even in cases of great popular support, which may sustain a regime without justifying its claim of exemption. The difference between sociological and normative legitimacy should help locate this failure.

This third failure is the uncreatable kind of paternalism. The ruler is dedicated to wellbeing but also deny those afflicted any positive contribution to find harm or amend policy. This rule may so work well for a period at least as it leaves its subjects as vulnerable to dominated judgement as in the original cycles of marginalisation. The Nikāyas can criticise ignorance and neglect but in their monarchical materials paternalistic correction is less institutionalised, and external commitment to equal public standing becomes most vital. The structure can lay bare failure, but it accepts its best solution to be progressive.

These breakdowns also overlap. A morally-preferred government can hide indications of functional reversal, while paternalist language frames critique as ingratitude. The strength of the reconstructed language is that it disentangles these moves. Provision does not displace restraint; religious identity does not secure competence; competence does not displace correction. The language reorients political critique more precisely than an appeal to righteousness.

14.4 Legitimate authority as a continuing relation

The main lesson is that legitimacy can never be viewed as an asset, which once acquired, is no longer contingent upon performance. Whether based on the inaugural acceptance, military might, dynastic inheritance or virtue, legitimacy remains always justified, given the conduct of power. This ongoing relation between legitimizing grounds and deserving reasons becomes acute when texts narrate how power collapses, due to a failure to perform obligations. An office may persist while its grounds for benevolent operation erode. Political legitimacy is as a result an unresolved issue, not a historical achievement.

It is not to say that every policy error that occurred would abolish government. Political institutions operate under uncertainty and can mess up in trying circumstances. A plausible modern analog of the Nikāyas would entail separating outright mistake from culpable neglect, ignoring of problems, and exploiting for personal gain; separating correcting a policy decision from tossing an official out or changing the government; and so forth. The Nikāyas do not offer these proportions. Its innovation is that the ruler's activities are still checkable, and his or her accountability still cannot be fulfilled by taking shelter in origin or status alone.

The result of this setup then is a position intermediate between political sanctification and political dismissal. Government is important because the way it operates conditions the quality of life, but it is not the ultimate foundation of value. Authority may be justified, but the justification is contingent; power is bound by standards of morality, but the standards themselves require institutions to be properly understood. The third of these statements is the article's most vital contribution to an account that would otherwise read as justified monarchy. It is the point at which comparative political theory becomes constructive while still leaning heavily upon its textual evidence.

OBJECTIONS AND ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

15.1 Is the reconstruction too political

One criticism is that in this article religious instructions have been transformed into political instructions by removing select sentences from their soteriological context. The critique is sound if a translation implies that the text begins and ends with the emancipation theme or that all moral teaching was meant as a guide for the ruler. Here, each text's context has been retained and dogmatic political assertions distinguished from proposals. DN 5, for example, continues as an address on sacrifice; MN 61 as advice on deeds; MN 95 as a search for truth.

A religious tale can be political. A story about the effects of withholding resources involves a figure of authority, even if its moral is more general. So to a speech that highlights the circumstances in which a state does not decline involves arrangements of the life of the public – even if wrapped up in a narrative of the Buddha's last journey. Politics is not exhausted by texts that describe themselves as statecraft. But it must describe, in that disciplined way, why these texts mean what they mean.

In March's (2009) words, comparative political theory can clarify our goal. Cross-traditional study should do more than expand familiar structures with new examples. It can reveal controversies about the nature and significance of politics itself. The Nikāyas undermine the presumption that a perfect life necessarily culminates in political action or that the final guarantor of a common life is the state. Those differences do not impede a political analysis of the sources; they are the very fruit of it. The reconstruction would be less comparative, and less liberal, if we ejected them.

Another issue is that the article tends to view the canon as too all one piece. The principle does not suggest that all discourses have one and the same political ideology and that all tensions have one possible solution. It observes the same motif in a certain sample of passages and pushes its boundaries with oppositional examples. The positive stance to the assembly, the tendency towards ideal kings, the emphasis on renouncing the power of fortune do not rigidly fit one institutional structure. Their pluralistic coexistence lends support to a more undetermined field of political reflection, whose strongest agreement lies in the assessment of behavior rather than exclusive validities of one political arrangement.

15.2 Does moral accountability already constitute constitutionalism

A second objection is that the differentiation of standards of morality and of institutions introduces a wrongly modern conception of a constitution. If the ruler was really bound by custom, religious fulfilment and dread of moral sanctions then why not admit that they amounted to a constitution? The answer hinges on the meaning of a constitution. If a constitution is understood in an expansive sense of the ordering principles of a polity then such standards could be constitutional. The article's point is narrower: they should not be taken as already classed as externally actionable rules whose operation can be specified independently of the ruler's so-called voluntary submission.

Such a distinction does not negate the effectiveness of informal institutions. A custom, for example, can be enforced through coordinated withdrawal of support, by reputation sanction, or by authority vested in a corporate body. Where this can be proven in specific historical case, it should be included. What is hard to prove still is a general account of such mechanisms to control a king; the Nikāya texts, cannot just be used to infer them exist, simply because the king is commanded to behave well. The article simply refrains from dismissing historical inquiry, rather than assuming that this is only possible in modernity.

A further objection considers whether karmic consequences themselves act as enforcement. Within the religious system, moral consequences can be highly significant. Still, they do not provide individuals with an immediate method for stopping abuse, determining facts, or securing repair. They differ from political accountability with agent, timing, and accessibility. Treating them as equivalent would overlook the particular vulnerability of those currently under power. The chance that a ruler may eventually face consequences for wrongdoing does not, by itself, protect someone harmed today.

The difference is this way functional, not civilizational. Modern political order fails too when formal institutions are powerless to check actual power. A court that is theoretical but impotent may provide less restriction than a sturdy traditional body. And this typology can criticize both. Its evaluative criterion is who can disarm authority and enforce correction, not whether an institution is a sign of the highest historical stage. Early Buddhist criteria are still politically rich where their implementation is not.

15.3 Is the interpretation insufficiently democratic

A third objection claims that the paper underestimates the democratic potential of collective appointment, assembly, and monastic procedure. Here the argument distinguishes the promise from the fulfilled doctrine. These features are Yes genuine resources for democratic progress. A contemporary Buddhist democrat could link them up with the ideals of equal citizenship, temporary authorisation and public review. The paper refuses to dismiss that enterprise. It contends instead that the new commitments need to be recognised as part of the construction, not as faithful translations of the sources.

That distinction matters both politically and historically. If democratic legitimacy is justified only by asserting that the canon already takes it, critics may counter with texts that support monarchy. The discussion then shifts to which passage reflects the true tradition. A stronger case clarifies why democratic institutions are appropriate in the present context and how Buddhist ethical principles can support them. Equal status, safeguards against domination, and dependable correction can be justified on their own grounds while still engaging with traditional sources.

The interpretation also refuses to free modern democracy of criticism. Electoral provision does not ensure that governments will be ethically restrained, economically provided, or properly distinguished from harm. A majority may actually vote to plunder, and democratically provided government may effectively abandon helpless sufferers. Nikāya criteria may criticise democratic governments as well as monarchies. Their worth is not exhausted in demonstrating they coincide with democracy; they seek an answer to what governments do with licensed power, and whether we confuse public advantage with moral specialness.

The danger is the reverse. Democratic criticism cannot be used to legitimise authoritarianism. Highlighting the faults of democracy does not grant greater legitimacy to the task of governing by a kindly but authoritarian regime. The alternative must take into consideration the option for correction after a failure of 'kindness'. To be convincing, the faults of a democratic system must call for reform, and not abstention from public judgment. But, the reconstructed Buddhist way of thinking boosts this position when welfare and restraint are further rooted in institutional accountability. It diminishes it when the mark of exemplary personal character is substituted for the people's right of contestation.

15.4 Does non-harming make government impossible

A fourth point of contention is that a strong non-harming ethic leaves no space for coercive government. The extremeness of the ethical ideal – shown in the MN 21 story of maintaining a non-hateful mind while being abused – should be taken into account though in considering the exceptional monastic pedagogical environment of this passage (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi 1995 MN 21) (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995, MN 21). It is not a matter to treat arbitrarily as a directive for police, courts, or defence policy. Neither is it to be dismissed as merely irrelevant where governments face danger.

The most effective response maintains the tension between ethical ideals and public responsibility. Governments may need to limit harmful actions while rejecting cruelty, revenge, and the celebration of violence. Deciding whether a specific use of force is acceptable needs careful reasoning that considers the situation and possible alternatives. The chosen texts do not provide a complete set of case-by-case guidelines. Their refusal to grant moral purity to official harm remains important, even if it does not resolve every challenging situation. Political ethics can highlight the burden that responsible action must bear, without guaranteeing a fully satisfactory solution.

One must also separate a lack of hatred from a lack of firmness. Suppressing violence might demand firm action, but the reasons for and effects of that action could still be evaluated. A policy might aim to prevent harm without transforming the offender into a target of extravagant ill will. The political challenge is to preserve the distinction in practice. Practice-tools like training oversight evidence, and review are modern institutional solutions to this challenge. Their necessity proves that moral education can't do the whole job, while their content proves why it must have a certain content.

These critiques bolster the article's core methodological point: The Nikāyas should not be converted into a set of decontextualized, supposedly timeless, didactic slogans; nor should they be reconfigured as an entirely modern, comprehensive political institution. What makes the Nikāyas 'useful' is a unique configuration of responsibility, of restraint, and of politic power-thirst. What makes the Nikāyas 'flawed' is a question, which centres on the difference between what a good ruler would do and how citizens might guard themselves from a bad one. And a major conceptual work needs to keep both that perspective.

CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS AND A POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH AGENDA

16.1 A public justification test for governing decisions

It can be extended into a modern public justification test, if it is kept conceptually and methodologically separate from textual exegesis. Its first question is functional: what is the social problem at which the alleged exercise of power is directed? Its second is distributive: who pays the costs and who receives the benefits? The third is preventative: have harmful, avoidable background causes been taken care of? The fourth is ethical: is the exercise of power cruel, deceitful, or unnecessarily injurious? The fifth is remedial: are those affected able to object to the decision and receive a serious reply?

They are meant to put the article's analysis into a form usable in a political argument without asking a reader to accept every Buddhist doctrine. They will not yield a mechanical answer. Multiple goods may be at odds. There may be irreducible uncertainty in the evidence and irreducible disagreement among reasonable actors. Their goal is to foreclose particular workarounds: citing authority but no function, framing coercion as the sole available response without first examining harm prevention, presuming good intentions to the exclusion of other possibilities, and characterizing criticism as hostile. Each workaround represents a false step discussed in the previous textual analysis.

This is a hypothetical example of a public-order intervention that alters detention according to repeated theft. The functional question: are people actually protected, or is the intervention mainly an indication of government resolve? The distributive question: who is made safer and who is placed at greater risk? The preventive question: have material insecurity and administrative failure been considered? The ethical question: how are people treated, error tolerated, and harm foreseeable? The corrective question: are those wronged able to challenge the intervention? This is not a legal advice or a normative theory of measured effect.

The illustration demonstrates that the Nikāya analysis is more challenging than bland appeals to compassion. Compassion can engender action, but political justification involves reasons that can be evaluated by others. The sources bring to mind deprivation and the

avoidance of harm; for us present-day institutions translate that concern into inquiry and treatment protocols. The structure because of this achieved is neither all consequence-based nor all procedure-based. It places judgments on ends and means, circumstances, and consequences, and decision-makers and those on whom decisions are imposed.

16.2 Welfare without dependence on personal favour

The welfare passages suggest that public provision should be seen as an ongoing responsibility rather than a discretionary display. A modern extension would support transparent criteria, reliable access, and ways to identify exclusion. These features are not specified in DN 5 or DN 26, but are proposed here because a duty based solely on personal benevolence remains vulnerable to succession, ignorance, and selective treatment. The justification for this combines textual criticism of neglect with a clear modern commitment to equal public standing.

This extension also changes the relationship between recipients and the government. People receiving support should not have to show political loyalty or religious conformity to receive what a program promises. Otherwise, provision can become a tool for domination. A ruler may improve material wellbeing but make access dependent on loyalty, turning a public good into a private means of control. The Nikāya critique of self-interested behavior gives a moral reason to distrust such arrangements, and institutional accountability offers a way to expose and correct them.

Within political-science, a study might examine whether alternative provision either decreases or simply shifts, dependency. Pertinent facts might encompass the precision of eligibility rules, the uniformity of implementation, the expense of complaining, and the tenor of resistance for beneficiary. A political-science study would not establish that the religious dogma is true. It would establish that an institutional arrangement achieves the publicly agreed-upon norms derived through reconstruction. That distinction averts an interpretive article from claiming empirical confirmation it has not sought.

The same might be said for admin capacity. Instead of seeing virtue and organisation as a split, it could be investigated whether sufficient appropriate staff remuneration information and review trigger behaviour you want. DN 5 establishes a link between material conditions and orderly service, but contemporary causal arguments demand outside confirmation. The paper offers a compelling reason to look for the link and a language for deciding whether it is politically significant. It does not argue that textual authority substitutes for empirical research.

16.3 Security without moral exceptionalism

The war and punishment texts endorse investigating how states characterize their own force. Modern investigations might ask whether public speech asserts victory as moral justification, whether inflicted damages are taken as givens, and whether the suffering of outsiders is counted as relevant. Analysis might compare stated reasons to decision mechanisms and evidence. It should not take for granted that Buddhist hood entails nonviolence. Religious identification, moral argument, and actual policy are distinct subjects for research.

The principle of non-exemption is mainly helpful in our case. It asks whether office holders are willing to apply standards that can be used against themselves. A government that extols moderation only when referring to its rivals does not live up to the constraint. Also, a prince who appeals to mercy while blocking the inquiry into objectionable behavior employs a moral register without inviting its application. The approach under consideration this way emphasizes the availability of wrong-speaking and the symmetry of judgement rather than tallying the number of religious references in public speeches.

What a modern institution can demonstrate is the implementation of this principle through critical review, public reporting, and redress for incorrect injury. These processes need their own protections because critics may be biased or information may be secret. The Buddhist contribution does not lie in providing a total control system; it lies in undermining the thesis that the very purpose of a control is to do away with its necessity.

It also demonstrates the restrictions of leadership education. Training on its own might improve decision making and ease hostility but cannot replace external scrutiny. A regime that entrusts trained officials to do their jobs without opening the door to challenge is a regurgitation of the reliance on private virtue that underpinned the character of righteous monarchy. The more palatable symbiosis balances discipline with the means for others to unmask its shortcomings.

16.4 Religious pluralism and publicly accessible reasons

A Buddhist way into the public realm need not mean that the state formalises Buddhism. The difference between an inspirational or motivated voice and a compellable moral reason enables religious citizens to express their anxieties within their tradition and to provide reasons intelligible to others. Poverty fear cruelty, exploitation, and marginalisation are not only intelligible to Buddhists. At the same time, the fact of differences about meaning and priority make them vulnerable to contention. Accessibility should imply openness, not an illusion of moral neutrality.

The reconstructed model further restricts the political application of the norm of religious protection. Safeguarding communal rights to religious practice is different from granting religious communal institutions authority over others. The state can protect religious people against violence without treating difference and non-adherence as inferior rights-holders. If religious identity is to be a requirement for full citizenship, extending protection to it would contradict the article's stress on public contestability and its condemnation of status rights exemption. This decision is based on other current assumptions; it is not a precise translation of constitutional text from the Nikāyas.

The analytic point is to avoid the false dilemma that presents excluding religion from politics and delegating religious authority to end debate. Traditions can offer real critique, yet continue to be accountable to basic calls for proof and accountability. The nikāyas' own accounts of inquiry, scrutiny, and the constraints of status are resources; but such resources must be institutionalized if they are to serve those who refuse the authority of tradition. A pluralistic political order must depend not solely on internally maintained standards whose interpretation is entrusted to one group.

16.5 Questions for future research

The present study raises various questions for future research, and does not claim to answer them empirically. One issue is that of reception: how have subsequent Buddhist political actors understood the space between royal duty and actual enforceable accountability? Another is that of institutions: what factors have allowed religious communities to critique kings, and what factors have dissolved that space under patronage? A third is that of the public good: what has been the dynamic relationship between the Buddhist 'field' of ethics, and the rights-discourse in debates over material goods? All of these questions must be answered in a specific historical and regional context, rather than under one universal rubric of Buddhist political action.

This textual research can also broaden the case by contrast with parallel Āgama material and other early witnesses. This sort of work might make it possible to identify political formulations that are prevalent versus those that are idiosyncratic to specific transmission histories. The current discussion has not undertaken that sort of comparative philological work. Its conclusions are that means limited to the received Pāli corpus and to the scholarship that contextualizes it. The broader historical assertion about the earliest accessible Buddhist political thought might include that work.

Comparative political theory can also explore how viewing politics as having only limited ultimate significance influences democratic participation. Does separating the good life from political, power, foster, humility, and diverse associations, or might it reduce collective opposition to injustice? The outcome may vary based on the social status of those who hold this perspective and the institutions they can access. The Nikāyas offer support for both responsibility and detachment. Political analysis should consider how these attitudes are integrated in practice, rather than presuming that one necessarily overrides the other.

CONCLUSION

The Pāli Nikāyas contain a mass of political argument without providing a comprehensive theory of the modern state. Their teachings about kingship loss discipline, the assembly and the body politic ultimately make the exercise of power accountable to ends and criteria other than the ruler's will. DN 27 presents political administration as a way of dealing with chaos. DN 26 and DN 5 tie good government to protection and subsistence, while showing the partiality of punishment to social circumstances. The discourses on fighting and the instructions to the warrior refuse to settle the moral problem of violence through victory or identification with the victor. Other texts critique ancient régime privilege, demonstrate the limits of royal learning and identify values that political power cannot contain.

You can find this article's argument that those materials sustain something like a conditional legitimacy. The government can be defended for the goods it makes possible and duties it acts out, but it doesn't make itself legitimate; the ruler isn't lifted out of blame by office or family ties, religion, or victory. That principle offers a valuable check on that sacred air of power and head off legitimacy from becoming simply effectiveness or popular approval; a ruler can be wrong and an office can endure even if its functions are no longer justifiable.

The fundamental problem is institutional. The sources of duties and reasons of criticism are more distinct than their means of inducing change. Collective appointment is not identity with ongoing popular sovereignty; welfare responsibility is not enforceable social right; superior morality to the king is not independent judicial review. Assembly and monastic procedure reveals importance of organisational collective life, but their extension to equal territorial citizenship is open-ended. The discrepancy between a standard for judging power and a procedure for restraining it is this way pre-eminent and crucial, rather than simply marginal.

Naming this gap does not downplay the indices of failed hopes for modern democracy, it clarifies their particular additions. They relate political breakdowns with the unacknowledged material circumstances, oppose the moral fantasizing of force, reject rank as proxy for value, and decline to posit state capacity as the highest human good. These themes are capable of criticizing existing democracies as well as authoritarian regimes. A regime's electoral source is no substitute for plunder, and its social welfare gains, are not enough to neutralize random violence. Political judgement must address purposes, means, and ongoing systems of accountability simultaneously.

Contemporary use demands explicit additions. Equal citizenship, dignified dissent, disclosure to the public, and independent ruling, and redress for harm by officials cannot be casually read back to the Nikāyas. Instead, these can be justified as institutional innovations that bring the reconstructed normative account into play in the face of disagreements and degenerate virtue. The project is powerful if the latter is held to be an added-pedestal. Textural fidelity and political innovation are not at odds if we keep a clear division between what the sources say and what a modern argument adds.

Early Buddhist political ideas do not because of this amount to a complete liberal constitution, let alone an unqualified apologia for monarchy. Rather, they deliver a morally elevated but institutionally incomplete theory of a morally demanded and politically incomplete accountability in power. It is still a gift to political science but for it asks the questions about political life that authority hinders it from answering: for what can we legitimately claim authority, what do we fail to see by

ignoring the suffering of others, which wrongs do we justify by political office, and how do we rectify our mistakes when we refuse correction?

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