



April 22, 2008, Convo Hour
Collins Center

Wayne LeCheminant, Ph.D.

Departments of Political Science &
Asian and Pacific Studies
Loyola Marymount University

The Political Imagination and the Uses of the Story of Human Nature

Human nature, as a political concept, is much used. The idea that there is an essence or a nature to humans finds its roots in the earliest political thinkers. The belief that a state must somehow be designed to accommodate this nature has generally run hand in hand with the belief of a particular type of human nature. The just state must be attentive to human nature in order to be truly just.

In this paper I examine the political imagination and the implications of the various understandings of human nature. I strive to do two things in this paper. First, I attempt to establish that the types of states—authoritarian, democratic, etc.—for which various thinkers advocate are generally tied to a particular belief in human nature. However, these conceptions of human nature have generally been built on various errors, conjectures, and even assumptions that have been asserted merely to support a particular conclusion. Second, I will outline how we might start to create a more “correct,” even if tentatively, understanding of human nature that can be useful to the study of politics. Though thinkers have long erred in various propositions about human nature, the inclination to find an “answer” is correct, I contend. It is important to have an understanding of human nature so that we can think of ways to talk about a state that is as beneficial as possible. Given some of the advances that cognitive science has made in understanding various aspects of emotion and reasoning, I argue that we can take wary steps toward reconceiving something that is essential in human nature that might help us, at some point, in organizing a more just state.

Please **RSVP** by Apr 16, 08: dherreiner@lmu.edu

For more information, check out: <http://myweb.lmu.edu/dherreiner/junfacseminar.html>
To be added to the mailing list, please email dherreiner@lmu.edu