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CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

B.P.S.C.-111

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**Sample Preview
of the
Solved
Sample Question
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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY **B.P.S.C.-111**

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks : 100

Note: This paper has **two** sections. Attempt any **five** questions in all, selecting at least **two** from each sections.

SECTION-I

Q. 1. Write a note on Hobbesian sovereignty.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 121, Q. No. 3.

Q. 2. Examine John Locke's views on natural rights.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 126, 'Natural Rights' and Page No. 130, Q. No. 3.

Q. 3. Enumerate and describe the features of Locke's constitutional government.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 137, 'Constitutional Limited Government' and Page No. 139, 'Legacy of Locke's Constitutionalism'.

Q. 4. What did Locke have to say about the limit of toleration? Elaborate.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 148, 'Limit of Toleration'.

SECTION-II

Q. 5. Write a note on strategies of interpretation.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 7, 'Strategies of Interpretation'.

Q. 6. Describe Plato's concept of Allegory of Cave.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 18, 'Allegory of Cave'.

Q. 7. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Radical view of justice

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 30, 'Radical View' and Page No. 37, 'Radical View'.

(b) Plato's system of higher education

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 43, 'Higher Education'.

Q. 8. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Aristotle on state and good life

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 57, 'State and Good Life'.

(b) Aristotle on human nature

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 74, Q. No. 2.



QUESTION PAPER

December – 2022

(Solved)

CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY **B.P.S.C.-111**

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks : 100

Note: This paper has **two** sections. Attempt any **five** questions in all, selecting at least **two** from each sections.

SECTION-I

Q. 1. Discuss any two schools of interpretation of texts.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 12, Q. No. 4.

Q. 2. Elaborate upon Plato's idea of philosopher king.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 23, Q. No. 2.

Q. 3. Compare Plato and Kautilya.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 35, Q. No. 4.

Q. 4. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Plato's scheme of elementary education

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 47, Q. No. 1.

(b) Plato's critique of democracy

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 49, Q. No. 3.

SECTION-II

Q. 5. Critique Aristotle's ideas on state and good life.

Ans. Aristotle's ideas on the state and good life are central to his philosophy, but they are not without their critiques. Aristotle believed that the state was a natural entity that existed to promote the common good of its citizens. He argued that the state should be governed by virtuous individuals who possessed the wisdom and experience necessary to make good decisions.

One of the criticisms of Aristotle's ideas on the state is that his ideal of the virtuous ruler is unrealistic. In practice, rulers are often motivated by self-interest, and it is difficult to find individuals who are truly virtuous in the way that Aristotle envisioned. Additionally, Aristotle believed that certain groups of people, such as women and slaves, were inherently inferior and therefore not fit to participate in the political process. This exclusionary view is inconsistent with modern notions of democracy and equality.

Aristotle's ideas on the good life were also critiqued for their emphasis on the importance of virtue. Aristotle believed that happiness could only be achieved through the cultivation of virtues such as courage, wisdom, and justice. While this emphasis on virtue is laudable, some critics argue that it is overly prescriptive and does not allow for individual variation in what constitutes a good life. Additionally, Aristotle's focus on the individual's pursuit of happiness may be seen as neglecting the importance of community and social responsibility.

Furthermore, Aristotle's ideas on the good life were criticized for being too focused on the privileged class of his time. His idea of eudaimonia (human flourishing) depended on external goods like wealth, power, and status, which were not equally accessible to all members of society. This means that Aristotle's notion of a good life was not applicable to the marginalized and oppressed members of society.

Q. 6. Examine Aristotle's classification of governments.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 71, 'Classification of Governments'.

Q. 7. Discuss Machiavelli's views on human nature.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 83, 'Machiavelli's Conception of Human Nature'.

Q. 8. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Machiavelli on corruption

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 94, 'Corruption'.

(b) Hobbes on state of nature

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 101, 'State of Nature'.

■ ■

Sample Preview of The Chapter

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CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

BLOCK 1: TEXT AND CONTEXT

Text and Context: Reading and Interpreting a Text



INTRODUCTION

Terence Ball emphasised some fundamental questions raised by political theorists about the role of reading and interpreting a text in political theory. The first question raised was: why political theory scholars continued to write about the “great thinkers” of the past? The second question was: why bother devising (or reading) this or that interpretation rather than going straight to the source and seeing what the author has to say? To answer these questions, we will discuss various aspects of reading and interpreting a text in this chapter. We will also talk about why we read texts. To explain the process of reading and interpreting a text, the role of text and the context in which it is produced are considered. Different interpretation schools are also discussed.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

WHY WE READ TEXTS? WHY WE RE-READ TEXTS?

We read texts to connect with current issues. We are concerned with issues of liberty, justice, and political participation. In order to find solutions to contemporary problems in a given society, one must read texts and derive meaning from them. Reading and re-reading fosters multi-cultural understandings, particularly moving beyond the ‘white men’s interpretation’ that has long dominated political theory as a discipline. These new readings and interpretations from a group of scholars who are not white-skinned male scholars include the voices of people of different races, sexualities, religion and regions. As a result, the field of political theory itself is enriched. Terence Ball, a

leading scholar on the subject of reading texts, believed that the process of interpretation is both inevitable and necessary in reading. However, this act of interpretation is lethal. For example, if a particular interpretation violates existing laws or religious sentiments, one may be killed. As a result, the act of interpretation must be approached with extreme caution. He recognised the importance of interpretation as an effort to discover the true meaning of the text/author. As an ‘ontological category,’ Ball cited Heidegger’s thought on significance of interpretation.

The interpretation dealt with the nature of being. It was all about demonstrating the relationships between concepts and categories within a subject area or domain. Similarly, Gadamer emphasised the act of interpretation as an ‘ontological necessity’. The world we live in and the texts we read, according to Gadamer, are already imbued with meaning. We are born into a world of meanings, and we try to understand it through the language we speak and the traditions we inherit. According to Gadamer, we begin our journey of understanding/interpreting with a specific viewpoint (influenced by a specific historicity), but by the end of the journey, we may change our initial prejudices and assumptions about the given meanings. As a result, interpretation is a contextual and dynamic act. In the process, one broadens one’s understanding horizon, seeing common threads of thought even with those with whom we disagree. For Gadamer, the art of interpretation is an essential component of the art of living a human life.

Terence Ball explained that interpretations are based on previously understood meanings in a given context. Ball used the example of a man holding a blood-splattered knife. An interpreter who is unaware

of the context may misinterpret this person as a murderer. However, if the interpreter recognises the context as a butcher shop, the person with the blood-stained knife is recognised as a butcher. The scene is the same here, but how one interprets it is linked to awareness of context and pre-determined meanings. According to Terence Ball, a good interpretation reduces strangeness and toughness among different groups of people in various contexts. However, interpretations have the potential to cause misunderstandings. A misunderstanding can cause confusion and chaos among people. However, one thing is certain that there is no neutral interpretation. Interpretation is always done by someone with a goal in mind and preconceived notions.

STRATEGIES OF INTERPRETATION

The meaning of a text, according to Quentin Skinner (of the Cambridge New Historians school of thought), is something that lies within a text and is discovered or recovered by the person who reads it. The meaning of a text is something created by its author and assigned to it during the writing process. Skinner adheres to the principle of 'authorial intentionalism', or the author's intention. The author intends for this process of creating meaning and imparting it to a text to take place. The authors are fully conscious of (and control over) their own intentions, as well as the meaning of the texts they create. This is an approach that emphasises the author's point of view. It maintains that those attempting to comprehend a text cannot afford to ignore the author's intentions when writing it. It is a necessary condition for the interpretive enterprise to succeed.

In contrast to the preceding viewpoint, the conventional post-structuralist viewpoint emphasises the fact that the meaning of a text is created and given to it solely and exclusively by its readers. The text, according to post-structuralists such as James Risser, "remains open to a fundamental multiplicity of meaning, which, for all intents and purpose, must be produced" by the reader. This way of thinking about reading and interpreting a text is associated with the post-structuralist philosophers Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida's principle of 'the death of the author' (an author's intentions and biographical facts should hold no special weight in determining an interpretation of their writing).

It is critical to recognise that there are theoretical distinctions between reading, interpretation, and appropriation of a text. It is another matter that in practice, all of them may coincide. A reading is an

attempt to understand a text. This expression, on the other hand, is purposefully ambiguous in meaning, allowing for the possibility that different readers will attempt to make sense of the same text in different ways. For example, the reading could be about attempting to 'discover' some meaning that is assumed to be present in a specific text. It could also refer to an attempt to 'give' a specific meaning to a text or impose a specific meaning on it. These are two very different types of efforts, but they both fall under the umbrella of reading. As a result, any account of a specific text by readers can be regarded as a possible or plausible reading of it. There is no such thing as text misreading. This is the critical distinction between reading and interpreting a text. Interpretations seek to uncover something that the interpreter believes is hidden within the text itself. This 'something' is assumed to be the meaning of the text under consideration. To interpret a text is to attempt to recover or discover the meaning of a text, which may or may not be successful.

Those who claim to have done 'interpretation of a text' believe they are looking for the 'truth' about the meaning of a text. Readings, which are also interpretations, are expected to be true or false; correct or incorrect. They can be rated as being closer to or further away from the true or correct account of a text's meaning. In principle, opposing interpretations of texts can be evaluated using significant empirical evidence, and disputes between interpreters can be settled through rational argument and debate. Misinterpretation of texts refers to interpretations that deviate from the meanings of a text, even if we cannot speak of misreading of texts. Quentin Skinner has given the impression that the only legitimate way to read a text, in his opinion, is to interpret it. An appropriation, as opposed to an interpretation, is a selective reading of a text. The goal of offering an appropriation of a text could be to persuade someone to do something. The ideas of a text's author are taken up by appropriators and used for their own purposes during this process. In such readings, the appropriator's interests and concerns are reflected rather than the author's. Those who appropriate texts are willing to plunder them for ideas that they find useful and present to the world as their own ideas at times and the author's ideas at other times. When appropriators use the author's name, they exploit the author's authority in the field while distorting the meaning of these ideas by ignoring how the author used and understood them. Appropriators are uninterested in the author's intentions or the truth. Their readings are so careless, biased, partial,

TEXT AND CONTEXT: READING AND INTERPRETING A TEXT / 3

selective, unbalanced, and one-sided that they cannot be called interpretations of the text. However, it must be acknowledged that in practice, determining whether a reading of a text is an invalid interpretation or an appropriation of it can be difficult.

Terence Ball believes that both text and context are important in the debate over whether text is more important than context. To know what is “unintended” by the author, we must first know what the author’s “intention” is. A text also has a life beyond the author; a reader adds meaning to a text (in the same context as that of author and in a changed context). Reading text is a synthesis of two visions, that is the author’s vision and the reader’s vision. This merging point is called by Gadamer as “the fusion of horizons”. This fusion can be both illuminating and perplexing for Ball. Illuminating for reflecting the vast distance covered by the text from author to reader. Confounding because it is not required for the author’s and reader’s visions to intersect. Alan Bryan agrees with Ball when he emphasises the importance of authorial intention as well as the text’s own life. Bryan uses the example of Locke, who is regarded as an early forerunner of feminism for his work ‘Two Treatises.’ Locke may be surprised by this title, but it would be a mistake to believe that Locke’s writings did not inspire subsequent feminist academia and activism. There is nothing inherently wrong or illegitimate about believing that arguments constructed for one purpose can later be used for something entirely different. Bryan also uses Antonio Gramsci’s work as an example. In re-describing the Communist Party as the ‘modern Prince’, Gramsci adapted and made creative use of what he took to be Machiavelli’s notion of a ruthless and all powerful principle. According to Gramsci, the Communist Party, like Machiavelli’s Prince, must be willing to use guile, cunning, deception, and violence to achieve worthy goals. Gramsci was able to adapt Machiavelli’s arguments to a more modern and distinctly different context by substituting ‘Party’ for ‘Prince’. As a result, Bryan concludes that both the author’s intention and the life of a text are important.

Two essential components of text interpretation are: (a) intelligibility, or audience standards, and (b) legitimacy, or audience acceptance. If the author fails to consider the audience’s standards in terms of language, beliefs, and circumstances, the audience may regard the author’s work as unintelligible or illegitimate. Political theory and the texts in political theory are significant because they take into account both logic and language. Political theory texts combine

issues of political action and philosophical inquiry. It results in political innovation and conceptual shifts. It is partly due to the hybrid nature of political theory that its history, or any particular episode within it, is both difficult to interpret and useful to study and reflect on.

MEANINGS AND CONTEXTS

As context shifts, so do meanings. For example, John Locke’s book ‘Two Treatises of Government’ (1689) challenged Filmer’s ‘Patriarcha’ (1680), which held that all kings were Adam’s heirs and absolute and divine rulers. According to Locke, absolute monarchy is unacceptable, and it is impossible to prove that all kings are Adam’s heir. Even when both Filmer and Hobbes discussed political obligations, the nature of the ruler was different. For Filmer, the political obligation was justified by the king’s divinity. Hobbes justified political obligation in the name of a contract made between men for the self-preservation of individuals. Because facts are dynamic, no reading is faultless. They are filtered and coloured by the readings of other readers. Regular reappraisal of one’s own received values and the validity of interpretations is required. There may be several theories. It was dubbed a “three-cornered fight” by Lakatos.

Finding truth is a never-ending process of validation and falsification. However, the process of discovering truth does not always have to be done fairly. When the process of discovering truth is based on fairness, the result is referred to as scholarship. When the process of discovering truth is motivated by partisanship, the result is referred to as politics. Terence Ball believes that scholarship is not politics and that politics is not scholarship.

As a result, we can conclude that both the origin of the writing and the reception by readers are equally important. Authorial intentions are important, but they are not the goal in and of themselves. Intentions can also be discovered or rediscovered at a later stage. Unintended consequences can occur with any text (unexpected by the author at the time of writing). Reading is a problem-solving activity in which the reader connects the text’s content to current issues. Texts come to life only when they are carefully and critically reexamined, rather than when they are blindly worshipped. There is no single interpretation method that can address all of the issues. It is dependent on the situation. Interpretive issues can be found in any school of thought. Every author and reader has their own set of strengths, and each will do the text justice.

DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION

Humans constantly interpret the contexts and texts that surround them. Political theory students read and

evaluate competing interpretations of political texts. Political theory, as a subject that is constantly fascinated by its classic texts, necessitates an interpretation of not only the 'words' but also the 'meaning' of these classic texts. Such an interpretation is required to comprehend statements made long ago in various contexts, as well as to make them familiar and accessible to the present. Interpretation can sometimes lead to misunderstandings, and there is no such thing as a neutral viewpoint from which to analyse a text. What it does maintain is that there can be no understanding without interpretation. The following sections discuss various interpretation schools.

Marxian Interpretation

The focus of analysis in the Marxian approach is 'class' and 'its inequalities'. Conventional ideas, according to Marxists, conceal the heinous reality of class inequalities and paint false pictures of society's fairness and justice. The task of textual interpretation is then to reveal the raw reality hidden behind the rosy veneer. The goal is to unravel the web of deception spun by the mainstream point of view in order to reveal the true hidden social and economic reality. Crawford Brough Macpherson's 'The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism' (1962) is an important Marxian interpretation that portrays Locke as a brilliant capitalist propagandist. Locke's discussion of private property in the 'Second Treatise', in which he proclaims property as that part of nature which one mixes with one's own labour, is interpreted by Macpherson as a justification for the institution of private property. All theories, according to Marxists, are ideological masks. It is not explained how or why their own theory must be exempted (or explainable). Predominantly, Marxian interpretations also overlook the impact of identities based on other power structures (other than class) on shaping reality, such as caste, gender, sexualities, religion, region, and race. Even when they recognise other people's identities, they are relegated to a secondary role in shaping reality.

Totalitarian Interpretation

The rise of fascism and communism sparked interest in the philosophical underpinnings of modern totalitarianism. When one begins to look for the roots, they appear to be present everywhere. Plato's philosopher king, Machiavelli's ruthless prince, Hobbes' all-powerful sovereign/Leviathan, and Rousseau's all-wise legislator all appear to be forerunners of twentieth-century totalitarian rulers. Karl Popper's 'The Open Society and its Enemies' (1945) is a well-known example of this viewpoint. He interprets

Hegel's remark in the "Preface" to the Philosophy of Right, "what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational," as justifying everything that is now real (or "actual") exists by necessity and must thus be reasonable and good ("rational"). Hegel is seen as philosophically endorsing the proto-totalitarian Prussian state that existed at the time. A closer examination reveals Popper's misunderstanding. Hegel employs the term *wirklich*, which translates as "actual" and means "realised potential," rather than "real," as Popper believes. "What is rational is that which fully actualizes its potential; and that which fully actualizes its potential is rational," Hegel would say. So it is not a sinister justification for everything that is real (one of which was totalitarian Prussia). This example emphasises the dangers of appropriating a text (both conceptually and linguistically), which we discussed previously.

Psychoanalytic Interpretation

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, argued that our actions are motivated by desires and fears that we are not consciously aware of (state of unconsciousness as important). This approach proposes that psychoanalytic interpretations can be applied to a wide range of texts, including those in political theory. Thinkers such as Machiavelli, Burke, Luther, and Gandhi have all received this treatment. Bruce Mazlish's 'James and John Stuart Mill' (1975) is an example of this approach. Mill's 'On Liberty' is framed as a personal appeal and declaration of independence from his strict father. Mill may not have intended it consciously, but his unconscious desires shaped his work. He also had an affair with Harriet, a married woman. Given that his mother's name was also Harriet, this coincidence fits perfectly with what is known as the Oedipus complex in psychoanalytic theory. Mazlish, as expected, makes the most of it. Though sometimes insightful, psychoanalytic interpretations are speculative, impressionistic, and unfalsifiable. The approach also shifts the focus away from the text and towards the author, which is far from ideal for any attempt at textual interpretation.

Feminist Interpretation

Gender is the focal point of analysis in this approach, and it is used to examine political theory. Susan Okin's statement, "the great tradition of political philosophy consists...of writings by men, for men, and about men," captures the essence of this approach. This chasm has prompted feminist rereadings and reassessments of classic works. The first stage of this strategy began in the 1960s. The works of Mary