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UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL THEORY

BPSC-101

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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL THEORY

BPSC-101

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any five questions, selecting at least two questions from each section.

Section – I

Q. 1. Enumerate and describe the factors impacting political participation.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 130, 'Factors Impacting Political Participation'.

Q. 2. Write a note on Citizenship.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 147, Q. No. 3.

Q. 3. Discuss the revival of political theory.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 9, Q. No. 3.

Q. 4. Critically examine Weber's concept of legitimacy.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 17, Q. No. 7.

Section – II

Q. 5. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Welfarism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 24, 'Modern Liberalism/Welfarism'.

(b) Scientific socialism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 42, Q. No. 1.

Q. 6. (a) Michael Foucault on Conservatism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 79, 'Michael Foucault'.

(b) Radical Feminism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 71, 'Radical Feminism'.

Q. 7. Examine Lyotard's views on post modernism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 77, 'Jean Francois Lyotard'.

Q. 8. Explain the principles of representative democracy.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 127, Q. No. 3.



QUESTION PAPER

December – 2023

(Solved)

UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL THEORY

BPSC-101

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any five questions, selecting at least two questions from each section.

SECTION – I

Q. 1. 'Political theory is dead.' Discuss.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 2, 'Is Political Theory Dead?'

Q. 2. Examine Ralph Miliband's views on the state.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 15, Q. No. 4.

Q. 3. Write a note on Neo-liberalism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 25, 'Neo-Liberalism'.

Q. 4. Distinguish between Evolutionary and Revolutionary Socialism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 42, Q. No. 1.

SECTION – II

Q. 5. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Theory of Alienation.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 40, 'Theory of Alienation'.

(b) Edmund Burke.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 58, Q. No. 4.

Q. 6. Second wave of feminism: Jacques Derrida.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 66, 'Second Wave of Feminist Political Theory' and See Chapter-7, Page No. 78-79, 'Jacques Derrida'.

Q. 7. Write a note on democracy promotion.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 94, 'Foreign Policy Dimension: Democracy Promotion'.

Q. 8. Discuss representation in democracy.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 103, 'Representation in Democracy'.



Sample Preview of The Chapter

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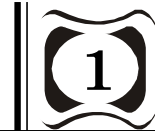


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UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL THEORY

What is Political Theory?: Two Approaches – Normative and Empirical



INTRODUCTION

One of the important areas of political science is political theory. Now, it is treated as academic discipline. The people who were earlier involved in the study of the topic were called as philosophers or scientists. Political theory is the correct term used in designating that intellectual tradition which affirms the possibility of transcending the sphere of immediate practical concerns and 'viewing' man's societal existence from a critical perspective. There is no science without theory and therefore political theory may be used for political science legitimately and accurately.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

POLITICAL THEORY AND OTHER INTERRELATED TERMS

The modern science has made it possible to distinguish between the political theory and political science. There are many perennial issues handled in the theory which is why a study of the classical texts forms an important component of the discipline. Specific political theories cannot be considered as the correct or final understanding of an event as the meaning of an event is always open to future interpretations from new view-points, each explaining and analysing from a particular standpoint or concern in political life. There is a difference between political theory and political science in terms of their boundaries and jurisdiction but their aim remains the same.

Political philosophy tries to establish inter-relationships between concepts and is therefore a part of normative political theory. The concept of political thought includes the thought of the whole community that includes the writings and speeches of the professional politicians, political commentators, society reformers and ordinary persons of a community.

Political theory involves theories of institutions, including that of the state, law, representation and of election. The aim of political theory is to explain the attitudes and actions arising from ordinary political life and to generalise about them in a particular context and political philosophy deals with resolving or understanding the conflicts between political theories. The objective of the political ideology is to give a complete and universally applicable theory of human nature and society along with a detailed programme of attaining it. There are many ideologies seen in the 20th century like: Fascism, Nazism, Communism and Liberalism.

The political ideologists perform a dual role, one of a scientist and other of a philosopher. Political theory as a science describes political reality without trying to pass judgement on what is being shown either implicitly or explicitly and as a philosophy, it describes the rules of conduct which will secure a good life for all in the society and not simply for certain individuals or classes.

Political thought refers to the thought of the whole community which involves the writings and speeches of the effective sections such as professional politicians, political commentators, society reformers and ordinary persons of a community. The political thoughts include political treatises, scholarly articles, speeches, government policies and decisions and also poems and prose that capture the anguish of the people. Thus, political thought involves theories that try to explain political behaviour and values to evaluate it and methods to control it. On the other hand, political theory refers to the theory by a single individual like theories of institutions, including that of the state, law, representation and of election. The objective of political theory is to explain the attitudes and actions arising

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from ordinary political life and to generalise about them in a particular context. The main concern of the political theory is about/with the relationships between concepts and circumstances. The objective of political philosophy is to sort out or to understand conflicts between political theories which might appear equally acceptable in given circumstances. Political ideology can be defined as a systematic and all embracing doctrine, which aims at giving a complete and universally applicable theory of human nature and society along with a detailed programme of attaining it.

The father of the modern ideologies is John Locke and Marxism also states that the objective of philosophy is to change and not merely interpret the world. There are many ideologies in the 20th century like Fascism, Nazism, Communism and Liberalism. Gamine and Sabine state that the political ideology is a negation of political theory because an ideology is of recent origin and under the influence of positivism is based on subjective, unverifiable value preferences. Also, Germino, like Plato differentiated between opinion and knowledge and stated the latter to be the starting point of a political theorist. There are dual roles of a political theorist one of a scientist and other of a philosopher. The combination of the two roles can be used for knowledge in a worth while manner.

DEVELOPMENTS IN POLITICAL THEORY

The changes that take place in the society refer to the developments in political theory. The response and the challenges that are produced in the process make political theories. The political thought which also emerges due to societal challenges is restricted in terms of time and space and is different from theory which breaks such obstacles and proves its worth in understanding and explaining political phenomena of different nature and origin. This is because the theories are purified from ideologies and biases and arrive at certain principles called as knowledge.

The objective of political theory is to provide a fleeting response and getting contented with a compromise and to reach at the root of the problem. This helps in discovering the remedies in the form of an alternative set of principles. A theorist not only think about the problems at hand but also beyond them. A political theorist is different from a poet in the sense that his urge and search are a conscious act with a definite design whereas a poetic act is one of spontaneity. Thus, it is not creativity, but consciousness that denies poetry the status of a theory.

According to Hegel, political theory can be signified as 'The owl of Minerva takes flight when shadow of darkness falls' which is very apt. The objective of political theorists is to search those principles whose understanding can make life better. The history of political theory carries out how ills and maladies afflicting societies have polished the tools of theorisation through which various accepted principles and practices and the assumptions behind them were questioned and the blueprint for the future was drawn. There are some failures which help in the improved understanding and resolving the issues. Thus, the main aim of the political theory is not limited to providing a fleeting response and getting contented with a compromise. But it aims at reaching the main cause of the problem and has to discover remedies in the form of an alternative set of principles. There is a difference between a political theorist from the poet in the sense that his urge and search are a conscious act with a definite design, whereas a poetic act is one of spontaneity.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF POLITICAL THEORY

There are many definitions of Political theory which vary on the basis of emphasis and understanding of its constitutive elements. According to Sabine's definition of political theory, it is something 'Which has characteristically contained factors like the factual, the causal and the valuational'. Hecker defined political theory as 'Dispassionate and disinterested activity and is a body of philosophical and scientific knowledge which regardless of when and where it was originally written, can increase our understanding of the world in which we live today and we live tomorrow'.

IMPORTANCE OF KEY THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

The key theoretical concepts in political theory not only consists of the study the institutions but also the institutional arrangements which varies from society to society because they are based on divergent sets of ideas.

Is Political Theory Dead?

Many observers started believing that political theory is either declined or is dead because the classical tradition in political theory is, by and large, loaded with value judgements beyond the control of empirical testing. According to Easton, the political theory is concerned with some kind of historical form and has

WHAT IS POLITICAL THEORY?: TWO APPROACHES – NORMATIVE AND EMPIRICAL / 3

therefore lost its constructive role. He added that William Dunning, Charles H. McIlwain and George M. Sabine are responsible for historicism in political theory. The four reasons given for the decline of political theory are historicism, moral relativism, hyperfactualism and positivism.

The reasons analysed by Easton for the decline of political theory in general and its decline into historicism in particular is as follows:

- The first and the foremost reason is the likelihood of the political scientists to conform to the moral propositions of their age leading to a loss of the constructive approach. The stress is on uncovering and revealing one's values which imply that there is no longer the need to enquire into the merit of these moral values, but merely understand their 'origins, development and social impact'.
- The second reason is the moral relativism which is the cause for the attention a theory received from history.

Revival of Political Theory

Traditionally, political theory existed in the works of Arendt, Theodore Adorno, Marcuse and Leo Strauss. They believed in liberal democracy, science and historical progress and rejected political messianism and utopianism in politics. The study of Arendt was mainly on the uniqueness and responsibility of the human being and Strauss focussed on the importance of classical political theory to remedy the crisis of the modern times.

The authors of the classics in political theory were geniuses and measured in their writings. Aristotle believed that a political scientist has to be impartial as he possesses a more comprehensive and clearer understanding of human ends. He evaluated political things and defended autonomy of prudence in practical matters and views political action as essentially ethical. Strauss alleged that the new science is responsible for the decline in political theory, for it pointed to and abetted the general political crisis of the West because of its overall neglect of normative issues. Political science and political theory as inseparable, said Vogel.

APPROACHES IN POLITICAL THEORY

The theorists in the past somewhat maintained a purity of conception in theory – building and seldom out stepped the framework they had chosen. This is not applicable in the contemporary times, in which the theorists are a witness to a crop of theory which appears

hybrid in nature. In all, there are three different conceptions which emerged in political theory: Historical, Normative and Empirical.

Historical Approach

There are many theorists who have designed their theories – building on the basis of insights and resources from history. According to the opinion of Sabine, a question such as what is the nature of political theory can be answered descriptively. In this view, political theory becomes situation dependent in which each historical situation sets a problem, which in turn is taken care of through solutions devised by the theory. Also, Cobban believed that the traditional mode is the right way to consider the problems of political theory. The historical conception also contributes significantly to our normative vision. In all, the belief of political theory is that each specific situation is unique, riddled with new challenges. The utility of the historical approach in political theory beyond a certain level is doubtful as it is always wedded to outmoded ideas from outmoded ages.

Normative Approach

The normative conception in political theory is also known as philosophical theory or ethical theory. The conception believes that the world and its events can be interpreted in terms of logic, purpose and ends with the help of the theorist's intuition, reasoning, insights and experience or it is a project of philosophical speculation about values. In all, these theorists conceived 'Utopia' in the realm of political ideas through their powerful imagination. The normative theory was advocated by Leo Strauss who argued that political things by nature are subject to approval or disapproval and it is difficult to judge them in any other terms, except as good or bad and justice or injustice. The issue with the normativists is that while professing values which they cherish, they portray them as universal and absolute and do not realise that their urge to create absolute standard for goodness is not without pitfalls. The exponents of empirical theory criticise normativism for relativity of values and cultural basis of ethics and norms and ideological content in the enterprise and abstract and utopian nature of the project.

Empirical Approach

The empirical political theory dominated in the 20th century which derives theories from empirical observations. This theory refuses to accord the status of knowledge to those theories which indulge in value judgements. The drive for value – free theory started in order to make the field of political theory scientific

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and objective and hence, a more reliable guide for action which came to be known as positivism.

This empirical project in political theory was premised on the empiricist theory of knowledge which claims to have the full blown criteria to test what constitutes truth and falsehood. The 'Behavioural Revolution' started which reached a commanding position within political theory in the 1950's and some new features were added which includes:

- (a) Inspiration to quantitative technique in analysis.
- (b) Demolition of the normative framework and promotion of empirical research which can be susceptible to statistical tests.
- (c) Rejecting the history of ideas and focusing on micro-study as it was more amenable to empirical treatment.
- (d) Idolisation of specialisation.
- (e) Obtainment of data from the behaviour of the individual and urge for value-free research.

Karl Popper designed the principle of 'Falsification' as a criterion of scientific knowledge and argued that all knowledge was conjectural, tentative and far from the final truth and then Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos and Mary Hesse blasted the so called scientific theory. Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* was a pioneer in bringing out the shortcomings and failures of the positivist theory which demonstrated how all cognitions were dependent on understanding and interpretation as a means of inter-subjective communication.

Contemporary Approach

Contemporary political theory came into existence in the 1980s and 90s as a reaction against the established traditions in theory and put the categories of Enlightenment like reason and science to which all traditions in political theory were tied, to a scathing and searching criticism. Broadly, the theories of the contemporary theorists can be summarized as follows:

(a) **Opposition to Universalism:** According to the theorists of this time, liberal universalism was devoid of a social and temporal context and believed that the hidden 'particularism' mostly based on the experience of western society has masqueraded as universal values and norms. The communitarian theory and the multicultural theory in recent times have highlighted it quite forcefully and called this so called universalist theories as 'exclusivist' at the core, which has always presented one vision of 'good' as the only vision of mankind.

(b) **Critique of Grand Narratives:** The critiques of Grand Narratives believe that there is an overarching or transcendental 'foundation' of reality and truth. The post-modernists also attacked by saying that there is nothing like objective pre-given reality or an objective social good which can support such grand narratives and their designs.

(c) **Post-positivism:** In accordance with the contemporary theories, the value-free enterprise is useless and believed that political theory is an inherently normative and politically engaged project, which is supposed to offer prescription and a vision for the future.

(d) **Empirical and Comparative:** The empirical-comparative methodology would be a check on the broad generalisation across cultures and continents. There are many weaknesses in the theory. Unlike classical political theory, there is not much comparative-empirical inquiry as yet and the tendency among theorists to borrow from the other theorists is galore.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 1. What do you understand by political theory?

Ans. Political theory is a very important area of political science and is an intellectual tradition which affirms the possibility of transcending the sphere of immediate practical concerns. From the critical perspective, it also views man's existence in the society. Political theory is a political science only as there is no science without a theory. Political theory is thus a synonym of political science.

Political Theory is the part of Political Science that explores what a better political world would look like and how we can create it. Political Theory frequently involves critiques of our present political reality and may even take explicitly political positions. Political Theory helps us better understand the concepts that have shaped our politics, including freedom, equality, individuality, democracy and justice. Political theory is the categorization of social thought by a group or by the persuasion or beliefs of a geo-political mass. Many political theories are founded as critiques towards existing political, economic and social conditions of the theorist's time. Political theory can also be considered as a critical tradition of discourse that provides a reflection on collective life, the uses of collective power, and resources within a collectivity. The emphasis of political theory changes over time.