

Political Theory

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Definitions of Political Theory

- **Body of knowledge related to the phenomenon of the state.”
While ‘political’ refers to ‘matters of public concern’,
‘theory’ refers to ‘a systematic knowledge’**

Definitions of Political Theory

- **The disciplined investigation of political problems in order to show what a political practice is, and what it means .**

What are the political theory studies?

- **It studies the state, its structure, nature, and purpose**
- **understanding human perception and nature,**
- **human relationship with the larger community**

What are the political theory studies?

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- **The context of political theory is located in man's adaptation to collective living.**
 - **To survive, devices means and ways of dealing with nature**
 - **To ensure effective adaptation to social and political organisation,**
 - **men deal with the problems of group life and social organisation**

What are the political theory aims?

- **aims to generalize about the right conduct in the political life**
- **and about the legitimate use of power.**
- **Thus, political theory is neither pure thought, nor philosophy, nor science.**
- **While it draws heavily from all of them, yet it is distinct from them.**
- **Contemporary political theory is trying to attempt a synthesis between political philosophy and political science.**

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL THEORY

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL THEORY

- **Political theory is an intellectual and moral creation of man.**
- **It is the speculation of a single individual**
- **who is attempting to offer us a theoretical explanation of the political reality**
- **Example : the phenomena of the state.**

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL THEORY

- **Political theory contains an explanation of man, society and history.**
- **It probes the nature of man and society:**
- **how a society is made up and how it works;**
- **what are the important elements;**
- **what are the sources of conflict in the society and**
- **how they can be resolved.**

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL THEORY

- **Political theory is discipline based.**
- **Thus we are confronted by a variety of political theories,**
- **each distinguished by a discipline on which it is based**

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL THEORY

- **Political theory not only comprehends and explains the social and political reality**
- **but is also actively engaged in hastening the process of history.**
- **The task of political theory is not only to understand and explain but also to device ways and means to change the society.**

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL THEORY

- **Political theory also includes political ideology.**
- **Ideology in simple language means a system of beliefs, values and ideals by which people allow themselves to be governed.**
- **We find a number of ideologies in the modern world such as liberalism, Marxism, socialism etc. All political theories from Plato to date reflect a distinct ideology of the writer**

SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL THEORY

- **Political theory is a form of all embracing system of values**
- **which a society adopts as its ideal**
- **with a view to understand the political reality .**
- **It involves speculation at higher level about the nature of good life, the political institutions appropriate for its realization**

SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL THEORY

- **The importance of political theory lies in providing a description of the political phenomena;**
- **a non-scientific and a scientific explanation;**
- **proposals for the selection of political goals**
- **and political action, and;**
- **moral judgment**

SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL THEORY

- **The significance of theory lies in evolving various doctrines and approaches.**
- **This is as important as peace, order, harmony, stability and unity in the society.**
- **In fact peace and harmony in the society very much depends upon how we interpret and implement the values of liberty, equality and justice**

SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL THEORY

- **When political theory performs its function well,**
- **it is one of the most important weapons of struggle for the advancement of humanity.**

MAJOR APPROACHES OF POLITICAL THEORY

- **1. classical approach (Plato, Aristotle)**
- **2. liberal approach (Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Jeremy Bentham, J.S. Mill, Herbert Spencer and other writers).**
- **3. Marxist approach (Karl Marx, Engels and their subsequent followers like: Lenin, Bukharin, Stalin, Rose Luxemburg, Gramsci, Lukacs, Austro-Marxists, the Frankfurt school, Herbert Marcuse, the New Left theorists, Euro-communists, Mao Tse Tung and host of others).**
- **4. Empirical approach**
- **5. contemporary approach**

Empirical approach

- **In the early twentieth century, Max Weber, Graham Wallas and Bentley gave an empirical dimension to the study of political theory and advocated that its study should be based upon ‘facts’ only.**
- **Another writer George Catlin emphasized that the study of political theory should be integrated with other social sciences such as sociology, psychology, anthropology etc.**

What does the new method approaches stress?

- **The new approach advocated that the method of studying should be through the behaviour of human beings as members of political community.**

CONTEMPORARY APPROACH

- **Thinkers like Thomas Kuhn, John Rawls, Herbert Marcuse, Eric Vogelín, Robert Nozick, Issah Berlin and Leo Strauss have contributed to the revival of political theory in the form of contemporary approach.**

Tasks of contemporary political theory

- **David Held has identified the following four distinct tasks of contemporary political theory:**
- **1. Philosophical:** It is concerned with the normative and conceptual framework. Directorate of Distance
- **2. Empirical:** It is concerned with the problem of understanding and explanation of the concepts.

CONTEMPORARY APPROACH

- **3.Historical:** It is concerned with the examination of the key concepts of political theory in historical context.
- **4.Strategic:** It is concerned with an assessment of the feasibility of moving from where we are to where we might likely to be.

Questions

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