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UNIT: I

Course: MAP (C) 101 Introduction to Political Theory

Department of Politics and Governance

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1. Political Theory: Nature, Scope and Significance:

There are many political issues that marked last one year. The protest of students against University Grants Commission's (UGC) decision to stop MPhil-PhD fellowships, tribals in the region of Bastar protesting against the fake encounters of tribals by Police force, demand of reservation in jobs by Maratha community in Maharastra asking High Courts to intervene and mass demonstrations on the streets of Kashmir valley against the human rights violation by the Indian armed forces. If we have a look on theses issues, there is something common which defines them as 'Political' and there is a reference to the institutions of the state: UGC, Police force, Judiciary and Armed Forces. The 'Political' is defined as the domain of collective life where there is fight over interests, claims are made over each other and where important and urgent issues are contested. There is a need for the explanation of these political issue sand events where there is a need of a theory. A theory is a supposition or system of ideas intended to explain something especially based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained. A theory gives number of ideas that relate to each other. Theory allows for prediction and falsification if something is wrong. Now when one talks about the Political Theory, it shares features common with the theories of the physical or the biological world but at the same time it possess characteristics that are distinctive. These distinctive features flow from its focus on the 'Political'. So the Political Theory helps us to understand the events and the institutions that are political in nature and it also speculates the future course of events and working of institutions respectively.

The three key functions that a Political Theory is supposed to perform are as:

(a) It explains at the most general level possible

(b) It evaluates and tells us what to do

(c) It speculates about our current and future conditions

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Political Theory is the direct result of objective political conditions. It reflects the thoughts and interpret the motives that underlie actual political development. Political theory indicates the sprit and condition of its age. On the other hand, political theory also influences the political development. It is not only the outgrowth of actual conditions but it in turn, lead human-beings to modify their political institutions. Political Theories are thus both cause and effect. Changing conditions create new theories; these in turn influence actual political methods.

The nature of Political theory is changing over a period of time. The former attitude was deductive, based on certain axioms as to the traditional nature of political institutions and authority. From these premises conclusions were reached by logic as to what should be, and political conditions were judged, not in accordance with actual circumstances, but in accordance with prevailing ideals based upon fundamental assumptions.

It remains to add that political theory is essentially relative in its nature. In the past it grew out of actual conditions and existing methods of thought; at present it represents our understanding of the political world in which we live and political ideals in which we believe. No theory of the state can be considered as ultimate truth. A century hence, under the changed conditions of that time, our present attitude toward political problems may seem as crude and absurd as many of the theories that have arisen in theist now seem to us. This does not, however, diminish the necessity that each age should build up for itself a philosophy of the state, based upon its developments up to the point then reached, upon the actual conditions then existing and upon the ideals of future then held.

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Elements of Political Theory:

An analysis of present political theory shows it to be made up of three distinct yet closely interrelated elements, which are as follows:

i) Historical Political theory: This deals with the past and consists of a body of literature including both the ideal speculations and the descriptive accounts of past political theorists. In addition to the writings of publicists, historical political theory includes the principles upon which past political institutions were actually based, many of these principles unrecognised in their own times, having been deducted as a result of modern historical knowledge of past politics.

ii) Analytical Political Theory: This deals with the present and consists of philosophical concepts and principles concerning the nature of the state, its essential attributes and meaning and justification of its authority. Questions concerning the nature of Government, sovereignty, liberty and law, the reaction of state to state and state to individual must be considered and satisfactory theory evolved to comprehend the modern state infall its forms and relations.

iii) Applied Political Theory: This deals with the immediate present and the future and consists of principles and ideals concerning the proper purpose and functions of the state. It observes the state in motion instead of at rest; it considers, not organisation, but function. It traces present conditions and tendencies and it points out the direction and method of possible reform and progress.

The modern political theory of State consists of historical survey of its origin and growth, of critical and legal analysis o its nature, elements, organisation and relations. For this study material is drawn from historical data, from past political theory and from present political conditions and ideals. Modern theory

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is also influenced by prevailing mode of thought and the accepted ethical standards.

Further Readings for the Class-room discussion:

Barry, Norman, An Introduction to Modern Political Theory, London, Macmillan, 1981, pp 12 -18

Bealey, Frank, The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science, Blackwell, 1999.

Bharghava, R, 'Why Do We Need Political Theory', in Bhargava, R. and Acharya, A. (eds.) Political Theory: An Introduction. New Delhi: Pearson Longman, pp. 17-36.

De Crespigny, Anthony, et.al. (Eds.) Contemporary Political Theory, London, Nelson, 1970, pp 40 -56

Held, David, Political Theory and the Modern State, Essays on State Power and Democracy, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989.

Heywood, Andrew. Political Ideologies: An Introduction, Houndmills, Macmillan, 1992.

Joyce, Peter, An Introduction to Politics, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1999

Marsh, David and Stoker, Gerry, Theory and Methods in Political Science, Macmillan, Houndmills, 1995

Traditions in Political Theory:

A. Normative:

The normative approach highlights its inclination towards a specific arrangement of things or an order that emanates from a commitment to a moral duty or universal necessity. The undercurrent of the normative approach includes questions about the nature of man. This tradition in political theory poses questions based on 'norms' or 'standards' with an aim to appraise values. Unlike the empirical approach that is concerned about 'what happened and why' the normative approach emphasises 'what should have happened'. It must, nonetheless, be underlined that these assumptions are not always valid because at times the two approaches might overlap. Occasionally, the normative approach may be based on empirical postulations to elicit how or what a

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particular situation should be or what the state of affairs in a country should have been.

Normative approach to the study of politics owes its origin to the political philosophy of Greek philosopher Plato. The thought of a good society or an ideal state and the entire structure of such a state are built upon the concepts like 'should', 'ought', 'preference' etc. The picture of state that prevailed in Plato's time was very far from of what ought to be or should be. In most of the city-states in Plato's time there was no place and recognition of morality, virtue, ideals and ethics. His great disciple Aristotle followed the footsteps of Plato and elaborated the ideal state. In latter periods we come across a number of philosophers who emphasised the normative approach of politics and the great contractualist Rousseau is a prominent figure.

The central idea of the normative approach to the study of politics is politics or analysis of state or the functions of state are to be viewed in the light of what ought to be rather that what they are. The normativeness wants to give preference to should and ought to be. It wants the realisations of certain universal values, norms or principles through, the machinery of state

The Normative approach criticises the functions, principles and policies of the existing states as did Plato[1] in his The Republics. Even today the same approach is followed. The criticism by the supporters of the normative approach has not always succeeded in changing the prevailing course of action of the state. Nevertheless, this approach has been able to aware people about the nature of activities of political institutions and it also suggest how changes can be brought in for the better.

Further Readings for Classroom Discussions:

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[1] In his book The Republics, Plato discusses in length the ideal state from the normative approach.

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Glaser, D. (1995) 'Normative Theory', in Marsh, D. and Stoker, G. (eds.) Theory and Methods in Political Science. London: Macmillan, pp. 21-40.

Monique Deveaux, Shifting Paradigms: Theorising Care and Justice in Political Theory, *Hypatia*, Vol:10, No 2, (Spring, 1995)

B. Empirical/Scientific:

Empirical tradition in political theory seeks to discover and describe facts. It aims at making an empirical statement which is concerned with 'is'. Empirical statement is concerned with a situation which can be observed by our sense experience which can be verified by repeated observation and whose accuracy can be tested. An empirical statement requires something to be done to serve a purpose, i.e., it has an 'instrumental value', eg, an act of voting for better democracy.

It is different from the normative tradition as it tries to categorize an act as true or false whereas a normative approach tries to categorize an act as 'right or wrong'. Empirical approach remains largely descriptive. It seeks to discover laws that are inalterable. These laws are beyond man's control and therefore can only be described and discovered.

Although it was less prominent than normative theorising, empirical tradition can be traced back to earliest days of political thought. It can be seen in Aristotle's attempt to classify constitutions, in Machiaveli's realistic account of state craft and in Montesquieu's sociological theory of Government and Law. In many ways such writings constitute the basis of what is now called comparative government.

C. Positivism and its Impact on Political Science

Positivism, strictly speaking, in its classic form, was largely a nineteenth-century French ideology of the unity of scientific method, which was held to have a radical political mission. Thus 'positive science' and the 'positive polity'

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formed a unity. The philosophy of positivism founded by Auguste Comte (1798-1857) who was living at times when there widespread upheaval in his own country, conflict with its neighbours and profound social changes brought by the Industrial Revolution in Britain.[2] The introduction of machinery in the day-to-day running of society in Britain had propelled the use of science and technology to the forefront of human thinking. Theology and metaphysics had been demoted.

It is hardly surprising that almost all of the definitions of positivism by Comte have something to do with science. According to him:

"Positivism is a theory of knowledge according to which the only kind of sound knowledge available to humankind is that of science grounded in observation."
and
"Positivism is a unity of science thesis according to which all sciences can be integrated into a single natural system."

For Comte, Positivism was 'scientific' because knowledge had practical value and the growth of science was for the benefit of humankind. To him, it was 'empiricist' as only humans could experience it. It was 'encyclopaedic' because all the sciences came under a single system of natural laws. And it was 'progressivist' because social stability could be restored by re-establishing a moral order, based on scientific knowledge, not on religion which made the world mysterious and prevented empirical inquiry, or metaphysical speculations which had no practical value.

The five important tenets that is useful to understand as what exactly is the Positivism are as follows:

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[2] Elaborate readings on the history of development of Positivism in France will be followed in class-room teaching.

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Scientism or the unity of the scientific method: For positivism, there is no essential difference between the methods of natural science and social science. In arguing for the unity of the scientific method, the natural sciences are generally taken to be the model for all the sciences. This entails scientism: the view that the meaning of knowledge is defiled by naturalistic science alone.

Naturalism or phenomenalism: Not only is there a unity of method, but there is also a unity in the subject matter of science. Science is the study of reality, which is external to science itself. This reality can be reduced to observable units or naturalistic phenomena.

Empiricism: The foundation of science is observation. Positivistic science is based entirely on that which is positively given to experience, in other words only that which can be subject to observation and verification.

Value freedom: Science does not make judgements on its subject matter; it is a neutral activity free of social and ethical values. Positivists therefore insist on a dualism of facts and values. Values, it is claimed, cannot be derived from facts

Instrumental knowledge: In general the institution of science as a profession in modern society has favoured the pursuit of technically useful knowledge, although this can take a variety of political forms. Positivism has taken three political forms: (a) the classical positivistic ideology of scientific politics, as represented by Henri Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte and by scientific socialists; (b) science as instrumentally useful knowledge but without overt political significance, as represented by reform movements particularly in Britain and the USA; and (c) instrumental, bureaucratic social science associated with the professionalization of social science in the twentieth century.

Criticism of Positivism:

Though there were debates and critic of Positivism over a period of time, the most important critics of positivism came from those who are writing from the perspective of the philosophy of science, namely Popper and Kuhn.

Popper's theory of science can be viewed as a critique of positivism, in particular of logical positivism, which he aimed to refute, but his was a critique that did not abandon all aspects of positivism.The main thesis in this revolutionary work in the philosophy of science is that the principle of verification must be replaced by the principle of falsification. Popper's argument against verification is illustrated by his famous example that 'no matter how many instances of white swans we may have observed, this does not justify the conclusion that all swans are white' (1959:27).

Kuhn in his classic work The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1970 [1962]) has offered the most sophisticated alternative to Popper. His main thesis is that science proceeds neither inductively as positivists maintained (from observation to theory) nor by the falsification of theory (as Popper argued). The most important factor in science is the shift from normal science to revolutionary science. He claimed, with many of Popper's critics, that scientific progress is not dependent on falsification to bring about a change in a paradigm. Scientists, he firmly believed, do not learn from mistakes, particularly if these errors are going to have very far-reaching consequences for the way science is conducted.

Further Readings for Class-room Discussions:

Anthony J. Sebok, Misunderstanding Positivism, *Michigan Law Review,* Vol:93, No:7, June, 1995.

JOANNA HEIDTMAN, KINGA WYSIENSKA and JACK SZMATKA, POSITIVISM AND TYPES OF THEORIES IN SOCIOLOGY, *Sociological Focus*, Vol:33, No:1, Feb 2000.

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d. Behaviouralism and Post-Behaviouralism

d.1 Behaviouralism:

Behaviouralism came into existence as a reaction against the traditional approaches of political inquiry and partly as a result of the quest in search for a more 'Scientific Method' of acquiring empirical knowledge during political analysis. Behaviouralism could be interpreted as a renewed and reinforced effort to take the "science" in political science seriously on the lines of the physical and biological sciences, and in line with new developments in the fields of psychology and other Social Sciences.

Behaviouralism, or the behavioral approach to the analysis and explanation of political phenomena, is particularly associated with the work of American political scientists after the Second World War, but its origins can be traced back to the works of Graham Wallas (Human Nature in Politics) and Arthur Bentley (The Process of Government), both published as early as 1908. Both Wallas and Bentley were inclined to lay greater emphasis on the informal processes of politics and less on political institutions in isolation.

Charles E. Merriam was another pioneer of the behavioural approach. He is famous as the founder of the 'Chicago School' which made substantial contribution to the behavioralists movement. In the article 'The Present State of The Study of Politics' published in American Political Science Review (1921) and in his book 'New Aspects of Politics' (1925), Merriam criticized contemporary political science for its lack of scientific rigor. George E. Catlin in his 'Science and Method of Politics' (1927) advanced the case for a value-free pure science. He treated 'power' as the essence of politics and argued that analysis of power should not be inclined in favour of any particular value-system. Harold D. Lasswell, (1902- 78), in his celebrated work 'Politics: Who Gets What, When and How' (1936) proved to be a landmark in the empirical approach to politics as the study and analysis of power. Despite these early

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attempts, Behaviouralism in political science was systematically developed only after the Second World War, particularly through the writings of American Political Scientists. David B. Truman, Robert Dahl, Evron M. Kirkpatrick, David Easton, Heinz Eulau; are some of the most prominent personalities of the Behavioral movement in political science

Behaviouralism became popular with the social scientists in the post-war (after world war II) years for both negative and positive reasons. Negatively, behaviouralism set itself against 'mere' description, 'raw' (barefoot) empiricism, 'simple' factualism; against metaphysics, abs- tract speculation, and deduction from 'first principles'; against 'grand' interpretations of history. *Positively,* it favoured studying successful sciences to learn and know how to apply proper scientific modes of thought and methods of research; focussing attention on actual observable behaviour.

Thus Behaviouralism aims to produce a body of knowledge that aspire to provide 'verified principles' of human behaviour through the use of the method similar to those of natural sciences. This methodological identity and the essential unity of human phenomena could lead to the integration of social sciences and to the development of the unified science of society. The aim of at least some leading exponents of 'social science' is to build up a body of scientific knowledge which could be used for controlling the social environment or for the scientific management of society. According to Easton, (1962) the intellectual foundations of Behaviouralism consist of eight major tenets[3]:

Regularities: Behaviouralism believes that there are certain uniformities in political behaviour which can be expressed in generalizations or theories in order to explain and predict political phenomena.

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[3]Easton, D. (1962). "Introduction: The Current Meaning of "Behaviouralism". In Charles Worth, James. Political Science. Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science. P. 9

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Verification: Nothing is taken for granted. There is emphasis on testing and verifying everything. According behaviouralists, what cannot be verified is not scientific.

Techniques: The behaviouralists put emphasis on the use of those research tools and methods which generate valid, reliable and comparative data.

Quantification: Behaviouralism also believes in measuring and quantifying the data.

Values: The behaviouralists have put heavy emphasis on separation of facts from values. There should be no pre-conceived notion or a biased view.

Systematization: There is a focus on systematic research where theory and research should go together.

Pure Science: Behaviouralism has seen disciplines like Political Science as a pure science. It believes that the study of disciples like Political Science should be verified by evidence.

Integration: Behaviouralism focuses on the integration of various disciplines like Political Science, History, Sociology and Economics etc.

d.2 Post-behaviouralism

Post-behaviouralism is a protest movement against Behaviouralism which emerged with some of the Behaviourailsts like David Easton who was originally one of the leading advocates of behavioural revolution. According to the advocates of the Post Behaviouralism, the Behaviourailsts instead of studying political problems of the society began to waste their time in developing tools and techniques and on such concepts as value free investigation of political problems. They also felt that the Behaviourailsts were doing irrelevant research not touching problems of social change, and even of revolution. So, along with David Easton, some Behaviourailsts announced a new revolution in 1969 popularly known as Post Behaviouralism Revolution that represented a shift of focus from strict methodological issues to a greater concern with public

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responsibilities. Now a question arises whether post Behaviouralism was a reform movement or another revolution in Political Science. But the advocates of Post Behaviouralism like David Easton, Austin Ranney, Peter H. Markel announced that Post-Behaviouralism is a new revolution but not Anti-Behaviouralism because Post Behaviouralism are not opposing Behaviourailsts but are adding to what is already being propagated, with certain modifications.Post Behaviouralism tried to remove the drawbacks of the Behaviourailsts which had came to light in actual conduct of their research, which was different from the objectives with which it started.

David Easton, who had earlier laid down the intellectual foundation of behavioural revolution has also,put forward new traits and orientation of the Post-Behavioural revolution. The seven principles of Post Behaviouralism as laid down by David Easton can be summarized as follows:Importance of Substance: The Behaviourailsts had puts a lot of emphasis on the development of sophisticated tools, techniques and methods. Post Behaviourailsts did not under estimate their importance but at the same time they made it clear that these should have much less importance than the substance which must have precedence over techniques. Tools should be used for a purpose. They believed that unless research was purposeful and meaningful for solving urgent social and political problems, there was no use of undertaking that. For them it was always important to be relevant and meaningful than to be sophisticated in the tools of investigation. For them it is always better to be vague than non -relevantly precise.

Importance of Substance: Post Behaviourailsts did not under estimate the importance of tools and methods but at the same time they made it clear that these should have much less importance than the substance. Tools should be used for a purpose.

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Stress on Social Change: The Post-Behaviourailsts condemned Behaviourailsts trying to preserve social order which was bound to hamper the understanding of facts in the broadest sense. They wanted that stress of contemporary political science should be on social change and not on social preservation.

Emphasis on Reality: The Behaviourailsts had lost touch with realities and kept away from brute realities of politics. Post-Behaviourailsts want that barriers of silence which behavioural language has created should be ended and realities of life situation accepted and problems of life solved.

Stress on Value Loaded Political Science: Post-Behaviourailsts however, did not agree with this viewpoint and stressed on value loaded political Science. According to them all knowledge stands on values and that unless value is considered as the basis of knowledge there is every danger that knowledge will become purposeless.

Stress on Human Values: Post-Behaviourailsts are of the opinion that as learned scholars' political scientists falls under the category of intellectuals and as such it becomes their most important duty to protect human values civilization.

Stress on Action Science: Post-Behaviourailsts puts a lot of emphasis on action rather than on contemplative science.

Stress on Politicization of Profession: The Behaviourailsts were not in favour of politicization of political science but Post-Behaviourailsts hold the opposite view. According to the post Behaviourailsts, to achieve the goals mentioned above there was a growing need for politicization of profession of all professional associations and institutions.

Further Readings that will be followed for Class room Discussions:
Dahl, R. (1951). Who Governs? (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Easton, D. (1962). "Introduction: The Current Meaning of "Behaviouralism". In Charles Worth, James. Political Science. Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science. P. 9

Lasswell, H. D. (1936). Politics: Who Gets What, When and How' (1902-78),

Walton, H. (1985). Invisible Politics. (Sunny Press). p. 2.

L.N.Sharma, Scientism and the Social Sciences, *Social Scientist,* Vol:7, No:7, Feb 1979.

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