

STATE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AS A DISCIPLINE

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It is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages and that human nature remains still the same in its principles and operations. The same motives always produce the same actions. Ever since people began to live together, problems have agitated the minds of men through all the centuries. The fact that the world as a whole requires an empirical political theory for its survival, existence and progress has made the role of politics more pivotal which inevitably requires formulation and making of a scientific political theory.

A subject unless it has well developed theory, cannot obtain the status of a mature 'discipline'. David Easton is still right when he says that political science is 'in search of its identity'. According to him theory alone accepts an overall responsibility for the coherence and direction of the whole discipline. As a subject it has retarded, amateurish, parasitic and has grown abysmally. The lack of modern political theory simply reflects its internal state of affairs. It is not politicology or politogy but only Political science and there is little harmony among its various segments or sub-fields. Some of them enviously compete with each other to become autonomous disciplines even outside the periphery of political science.

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The credit for making significant development in the life of political science goes to leading English and American writers of the present century. In 1908, Graham Wallas published his "Human nature in politics" in which he laid stress on the socio-psychological foundations of political behaviour. He rapidly attacked the tradition of rationalism in politics coming down since the times of Plato and Aristotle through Rosseau, Kant, Hegel, Green and instead laid emphasis on the role of irrational forces in the sphere of human behaviour. Artistic study of politics must be based on the role of habits, sentiments, instincts, emotions and the like which certainly influence and mould political attitudes of human beings. Lord James Bryce endorsed the points of Wallas that the curiously unsatisfactory condition of the political science at the time was owing to the persistence of an outdated, mistaken psychology. He also emphasized that the study of politics must be based on facts. Finally, we may refer to the name of G.E.G Catten who desired integration of politics with the study of other social science and thereby pioneered the course of interdisciplinary studies. Large number of political scientists in United States took heavy inspiration from biology and anthropology which gave powerful stimulus to the ways popularly called 'scientific method'. The establishment of the American Political science Association in 1903 came as a bold proof. Arthur Bentley, Charles A. Beard and A.L. Lowell became highly critical of the speculative theorists and utopia makers and instead they insisted on the greater use of statistical techniques for ensuring complete objectivity. They rejected all divine and social theorists of institutions and instead went in for a persistent attempt to get more precise notions about causations in politics.

Charles Heeriam though a traditionalist preferred the line of empirical political theory and earned the credit of being the arch-priest of behavioural tradition. The Chicago school of

behaviourism shifted emphasis from political ideals and institutions to the examination of individual and group conduct. It favoured a natural science paradigm over a normative and (how people act as opposed to how they should act).

In contrast to a priori and deductive methods of politics prior to 1850, and to the historical and comparative method which was dominant in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the modern methods shows a distinct tendency towards observation, survey and measurement. The American political scientists moved out of their ivory towers to face the realities of social, economic and political life. A De Torqueville, Robert Michels, G. Mosca, A. Pareto, James Bryce, Max Weber, M. Ostrogorski, Graham Wallas, Sigmund Freud, Talcott Parsons, Barrington Moore etc adopted a new orientation, so inter-disciplinary focus came as quite handy up to 1970 the trend of behaviouralism discarded the traditional way of aligning politics with norms, values and goals, the second phase starts from 1970 in which leading political realize the inadequacy of pure empirical political theory and veered round to the idea of the reaffirmation of norms and values to the possible extent thereto phases may be termed as empirical and trans-empirical or neo-empirical or neo empirical. Since traditional political theory is by and large speculative, it should be discarded as far as possible. Instead only that part of political theory should be accepted that is in consonance with the requirements of a scientific theory.

A new development in the form of a 'Counter-culture' took place when the causes of dissenters turned away from pure behaviouralism to the side of post-behaviouralism. Some of them were Daniel Moynihan, David Easton, Leo Strauss, Alon Wolf, Philip Green, Henry S. Kariel, Theodore Lowi, Michael Walzer, H. Mark Raelofs etc.

When the behavioural political theory was in its heyday, Thomas Kohn presented his thesis of the development of political theory through the process of paradigms i.e., transmission from one set of precipitation to another. In his study on the structure of scientific revolution he argues that new paradigms are accepted through a process that differs significantly from the techniques of first falsifying beliefs and then replacing them with propositions deemed tentatively and temporarily true.

Theory making efforts by various scholars at different levels and in unconventional areas have contributed a lot of variety and heterogeneity to political science. Their ultimate goal was to move towards or contribute to a general theory of politics. Meehan observes, 'For the present political science deals almost entirely with probabilistic generalisations and tendency statements. Universal generalisations are rare and perhaps non-existent. David Easton, Alfred Cobban, Mulford Sibley and others have talked of the 'decline of political theory'. As Mayo says, none of the theories deal with the entire social system, the goal of general theory of society remains unattained. Robert A Dahl found in the English speaking world, political theory is dead, in the communist countries it is imprisoned, elsewhere it is moribund. Political theory stood as a passive spectator during the two world wars and failed to save humanity from senseless devastation. Easton has analysed the cause under the concept of 'historicism' i.e., living parasitically on century old ideas. Easton wants a political theory containing reformation of values suitable to the present age. Moral relativism, hyper factualism and lack of renovation were also responsible for the decline of the theory.' Sociology of the knowledge 'also emerged as a concept but the prevailing notion of value-free political science led to hyper factualism or crude empiricism. So there was avalanche of facts which was swaying away the whole discipline.

Alfred Cobban also opines that political thinking itself has become direction less and lacks purpose. Abstraction of state as an engine of power keeps moral values away from politics. Danty Gerimo discovers 'ideological reductionism' and positivization of social science as the cause of decline of political theory.

Still there is another view that political theory even in the traditional sense was never dead. Plamenatz Weldom do not accept that it has even declined or dwindled. It has merely changed its form.

Notes

1. *Principles of modern Political Science* By JC Johari
2. *A history of Political Theory* by GH Sabine
3. *The democratic process* by Beni Prasad
4. *Political Science and government* by JW Garner
5. *Studies in Contemporary political theory* by KP Ghosh
6. *Modern Political Analysis* by Robert A Dahl
7. *Wikipedia on 'political theory'*
8. *A grammar of politics* by HJ Laski