

Paper Name : Western Political Thought

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Faculty Name: Dr.P.Kanagaraj

Mobile Number: 9443935919

Unit 2

Unit 2 .1 Machiavelli

- Machiavelli is an Italian political thinker
- He authored the book **The Prince**.
- He was called a Child of Renaissance.
- He is described as the last medieval thinker and the first modern political thinker
- He favored Republican form of government

Human Nature

- Machiavelli painted an extremely negative portrayal of human nature
- But above all he must refrain from seizing the property of others, because **a man is quicker to forget the death of his father than the loss of his patrimony.**
- Man is embodiment of crookedness, selfishness, greed, treachery and narrow mindedness

Main Features of Thought

- There should be complete separation of politics from religion and politics must have supremacy over religion. He supported secularism. He strongly believed that no divine authority existed over the political might of the kings
- Morality and politics are two entirely different entities. The ruler has his own moral standards and tenets that quintessentially sustain his hold over power. The moral

universe of the people does not apply to the actions of the ruler. He was against any ethical system

= for him ends justify the means and not the other way around

- He visualized politics only as a system of acquisition, consolidation and preservation of power without having any links to freedom, rights and justice

- He was among the earliest thinkers who visualized the birth and future of the sovereignty

-He was a pioneer in comprehending the advent of the modern territorial nation state system

- **The ruler must be both a king and a fox.** He must demonstrate the royal qualities of lion like bravery towards his rivals. He must be cunning and shrewd like the fox to defeat the conspiracies of the traitors

- The ruler should enforce law among the people. He is not bound by the law he promulgates. He is above the concept of Rule of Law.

- His single minded concentration was on the preservation of the state and the ruler

Critical Evaluation

Machiavelli is a practical thinker. He looked at politics as statecraft devoid of any ethical or moral dimension. He lends his name to the selfish attitude of political class as we describe their actions as Machiavellian. But the modern political system and international politics has many prominent features that were visualized and articulated by Machiavelli many centuries back.

Comment on the Following

1. *"He who wishes to be obeyed must know how to command."*

2. *"Politics have no relation to morals"*

3. *. It is better to be feared than loved, if you cannot be both*

For Further Reading

1. *Prince by Machiavelli*
2. *Discourses on Livy*
3. *History of Political Theory by Holland Sabine*
4. *Western Political Thought by C.L. Wayper*
5. *Western Political Thought by Bookhives Publications*

2.2 Thomas Hobbes

- He wrote the book **Leviathan**. He euphemistically called the state as **Leviathan** implying that it is a powerful institution. Leviathan was a sea monster mentioned in the Bible
- Hobbes was a tutor to the monarch of England Charles the First who was assassinated after a protracted civil war. This historical event influenced his political thought greatly
- He was one of three famous thinkers of the Social Contract tradition

Human Nature

- Hobbes portrayed man as a hedonistic animal. Man was masterless, autonomous and sovereign individual. He was very selfish in nature

State of Nature

- It is the condition of man before the state came into being
- As man was selfish the life in the state of nature was **brutal, short, solitary and nasty**
- No morals, science, technology, culture and civilization developed
- It is characterized by War of each against each and war of each against all

Social Contract

- All men after the realization of brutal state of nature came together and deliberated on the deplorable condition and its solution. They agreed to

sign a social contract through which they surrendered all their natural rights to the novel political entity created from the contract that is the state.

Attributes of the State

- The state is the child of the social contract
- The state should be endowed with absolute sovereignty. It must have the power and authority to enforce its will against the desires and activities of men
- The state never asked men to create it. On the contrary men only created it.
- **Covenants without sword are mere words.** The social contract will become useless and redundant if the system does not have wherewithal to enforce its decision especially against the will of the contract signatories.
- **Monarchy is the best form of government.** All other systems of governments are created out of the ashes of monarchy after it has been demolished through machinations. Man is selfish. Therefore it is better to have one selfish man as ruler as in monarchy rather than many men as in democracy.
- **Rights** are natural in the beginning. But once state came into being rights can only spring from law
- **Liberty lies in the silence of the law.** Wherever the law is absent or silent liberty will be available. When law comes into operation liberty will vanish in that domain.
- **Right to Self-Preservation** is recognized by Hobbes. Man left the state of nature and surrendered all his rights only for safety and security. If self-preservation of the individual is affected or endangered he can resist and revolt against the state

Critical Evaluation

Hobbes started his journey of political thought from individualism and ended unfortunately in the destination of absolutism. His portrayal of human nature is also subject to strong criticism.

Comment on the Following

1. Life of man in the state of nature was short, nasty, brutal and solitary
2. Covenants with sword are mere words

For Further Reading

1. Leviathan by Hobbes
2. Western Political Thought by C.L.Wayper
3. Western Political Thought by J.P.Sudha
4. Modern Political Theory by M.P.Jain
5. Political Theory by O.P.Gauba

2.3 John Locke

-John Locke is often known as the **Father of America Political System**.

-He lived in the seventeenth century in England and wrote the “Two Treatise on Civil Government”.

- He was tutor to the English King of Restoration Charles the Second.

-He was very closely associated with the Glorious Revolution 1688

- He is a leading thinker associated with Social Contract Theory

Nature of Man

-He does not believe in the Hobbesian concept of human nature. He considers that man is a social animal. Man does not suffer from any anti-social qualities

-Man is basically good, friendly and cooperative with other human beings

State of Nature

-Life in the state of nature was generally harmonious and peaceful one.

- But at times problems arose because of some degenerate men and more importantly because of the absence of the common law, law maker and law adjudicator.

- There were discrepancies and problems as several individuals contribute in the production process and no agreed laws governing the distribution of the produce

Social Contract

- To resolve the problems all individuals come together and after due deliberations and discussions decide to create a social contract
- One crucial difference between Locke and Hobbes is that while signing of the social contract and the creation of political community ends all natural rights of the individuals in the thought of Hobbes, for Locke most of the natural rights are retained by the individuals

State Organs

Through the social contract men create the state with three organs

1. Legislature that has also the executive power
2. Judiciary for adjudication of disputes
3. External affairs department

Features of the State

The state of Locke possess many distinct attributes

1. The state is not divinely created institution. It is an artificially created one. It is a machine
2. The state should be based on the consent of the people. The consent may be direct or indirect. Without the popular consent no state can exist
3. The state is a constitutional one. It is a limited state. Its powers are proscribed and procedure is prescribed
4. The signing of the social contract does not end all natural rights. Only certain rights are surrendered to the state
5. The individual retains one most important right with himself. This is the inalienable and absolute one, the Right to Property.
6. Right to Property is sacred and inalienable. It can never be restricted or limited
7. If the state does not respect the above attributes or deviates from all or any of them then Locke provides to the individual right to revolt.

Individuals can exercise the right to resistance if the above attributes are violated by the state

Critical Evaluation

Locke has been criticized by Macpherson for being a **philosopher of Possessive Individualism**. The ideologies of Marxism, Socialism and Anarchism reject the unlimited right to property that Locke had advocated

Comment of the Following

1. "Men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, with authority to judge between them, is properly the state of nature."
2. "The great and chief end, therefore, of men's uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property."

For Further Reading

1. Two Treaties on Civil Government by Locke
2. Western Political Thought by C.L.Wayper
3. Western Political Thought by J.P.Sudha
4. Modern Political Theory by M.P.Jain

2.4 Jean Jacques Rousseau

-Rousseau is widely known as the Father of French Revolution as his ideas inspired the revolution.

- He was known as the **Loafing Prophet of Direct Democracy**

- He authored the book **Social Contract**. While Hobbes and Locke speculated that the social contract was signed in the past Rousseau called for the signing of the future contract

Nature of Man

- Man is neither social nor anti-social but only asocial. His original nature was that of a **Noble Savage**. Civilization and culture had not touched him in the State of Nature and he was noble in his basic nature

Go Back to Nature

-Rousseau asks man to go back to nature that is his original human nature. Originally there are two instincts that govern human nature. First is the **instinct of Self-Love or Self Preservation**.

-Second is the **instinct of Sympathy**. Life is a balance between these two contradictory instincts.

-Man leads his life comfortably through a balance between these two instincts.

- But at times conflict may arise between Self-love and Sympathy. At that time third instinct called **Conscience** will come into being to guide man. Conscience will ask man to do the right thing but unfortunately it does not know what the right thing is.

-The fourth instinct called **Reason** will arise and inform man what the right decision is. Guided by reason and moved by conscience man will find a harmony between Self-love and Sympathy.

- The sad predicament of man arises because Reason has gone astray and has become arrogance and conscience has gone to sleep. Misguided by arrogance the Self-Love had become the sole tutor of man and sympathy or the love for

others had been trampled upon. That's why Rousseau asserts that **man is born free but everywhere he is in chains.**

-To solve this predicament Rousseau issues the clarion call **"Go Back to Nature"**

General Will

- - The greatest contribution of Rousseau to Political Theory is General Will
- General Will is not the will of the majority or minority or the rulers or all the people in the country. It is **the Will Wishing the Welfare of All.**
- Rousseau favours the **Rule of Law** as the basis of governance
- Rousseau says that **Man can be forced to be free.**
- The relationship between freedom and coercion is a complex one and occupies the commanding heights of the political theory
- Rousseau describes that there are two wills in any individual
- General Will of the individual wills the welfare of all
- Private will desire the personal development of the individual
- Tempted by private will man may decide to proceed against General will. At that time the state can force the individual to forgo private will and to follow General Will. Adherence to General Will is freedom. Therefore man can be forced to be free
- Rousseau is the Father of Popular Sovereignty. He argues that General Will and sovereignty will reside with the people. The popular vigilance is the seat of Popular Sovereignty
- General Will cannot be delegated. Rousseau advocates only Direct Democracy of Swedish Model. He opposes Representative Democracy of England.
- Rights are external conditions for the internal, moral development of man

Critical evaluation

- There are contradictory perspectives on Rousseau
- Rousseau has been accused of idealism and absolutism by one school of thought
- Another perspective considers him as the philosophical Father of 1789 French Revolution that popularized the noble ideals of Freedom, Equality and Fraternity.

Comment on the Following

1. “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.”
2. “The English think they are free. They are free only during the election of members of parliament”.

For Further Reading

1. Social Contract by Jean Jacques Rousseau
2. *History of Political Theory* by Holland Sabine
3. *Western Political Thought* by C.L. Wayper
4. *Western Political Thought* by Bookhives Publications