

In and tries to explain
various political



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In Political Science this method of investigation starts from some abstract original idea about human nature and draws deduction from that idea as to the nature of the State, its aims, its fractions and its future. It then attempts to harmonise its theories with the actual facts of history. Attempts have recently been made to differentiate between a political scientist and a political philosopher. It is maintained that not all students of Political Science confine themselves to the quest of factual knowledge of the discipline.

Some are mainly concerned with the search for moral knowledge. These political philosophers are interested not so much in how people and governments behave as they are in how they ought to behave. If the political scientist studies reality and tries to explain various political phenomena and the working of the institutions, the political philosopher essentially studies ideas and tries to discover which have the greatest validity.

The works of Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Edmund Burke, Jeremy Bentham, G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx, and John Stuart Mill all deal with the perennial questions of justice, equality, freedom, why should a citizen obey the State, is man good or evil by nature, is the society or the individual prior And a host of other similar questions.

These are moral questions and there is more than one answer to each of them. Rousseau says that men are equal, and Burke would deny that proposition. Hegel asserts that society is more important than the individual, and Mill replies that the individual is prior to society.

We read the works of all these political thinkers because they provide the best starting point for the study of the moral aspects of political life. Ronald Pennock and David Smith maintain that political scientists often debate the relative merits of various political values, such as liberty and order, and in doing so, “ they are philosophizing rather than practising.” Accordingly, it is asserted, that their field of study should properly be denominated “ Government” or “ Politics” rather than by the more restricted term “ Political Science.” As it is, Pennock and Smith conclude, “ We must recognize that we have scientific political scientists and philosophical political scientists. There is an important place in the profession for those who leave questions of political ethics to others and who strive for the greatest possible detachment in judging trends and seeking to determine cause and effect in political matters.” In other words, some “ division of labour” is desirable “ between those who consider what goals should be pursued and those who concentrate on discovering the best ways of attaining particular goals, or who merely try to chart the course we are following and predict whither we are bound.

” According to Talcott Parsons, the basic functions of every social system are four: it must maintain its own basic patterns, particularly those of its own governing and control; it must adapt itself to changing conditions in both its physical environment in nature and its human environment in terms of other systems; it must integrate its different tasks and functions; and if it has specific goals beyond mere adaptation, integration and the maintenance of its patterns, it must move to attain its goals. From Parson’s approach, Karl W. Deutsch derives a way of looking at “ Politics” and the sub-systems of

society in the context of these basic functions. Referring to the integrative sub-system of every society, he says that it consists mainly in its “ culture or cultural sector, including education, religion, philosophy and art.” Religion and philosophy, like education, teach the people “ the long-run nature of the universe, the long-run values of mankind, and, perhaps the long-run purpose for which mankind still exists.” The Government, or “ more generally, the political sector,” according to Deutsch, is the typical goal-attaining sub-system. “ It is the government that organizes the society for the pursuit of whatever goals the society may have chosen. Pursuing a goal involves forming an image of it, which we may call an intention, and then finding the means to implement the intention, or a course toward the goal.

” In any political activity where means and ends are involved ought to be cannot be altogether ruled out, no matter how we look at the subject of our study Ethical considerations, therefore, become imperative and some precepts of political conduct are necessarily to be prescribed. Philosophy, then, intervenes, in the study of Political Science. But the pitfall to be avoided in applying the philosophical method is that of attempting to defend one’s own personal opinion. The Philosophical method, like other methods in the study of Political Science, demands a detached and objective point of view. Though none can be completely objective, it is the desideratum and we must strive for as best as we can. Then, the goal to be attained must not be Utopian. Philosophers, swayed by their idealism, create conditions of their imagination and weave a web of ideas which is devoid of facts and realities of life.

Sir Thomas More, in his Utopia, conceived of ' that ideal State which is contrary to the facts of history and human nature. Such a philosophy degenerates into a mere ideology with dangerous results. Karl Popper says that the speculative or Utopian method " which chooses an ideal state of society as the aim, which all our political actions should serve, is likely to produce violence" and that " the Utopian engineers who design and execute the Utopian blueprint" must " become omniscient as well as omnipotent. They become gods." Even Oakshott does not spare those who seek " to turn a private dream into a public and compulsory manner of living.

" Political Philosophy must rise above all ideology. Ought to be must, as far as possible, coincide with what it can be?