

Meaning of Political Theory

According to Robert E. Goodin, the author of *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science* (2009), political theory is an interdisciplinary endeavour whose centre of gravity lies at the humanities—its tradition, approaches and styles vary but the feel is united by a commitment to theorize, criticize and diagnose the norms, practices and organization of political action in the past and present, in our own places and elsewhere. The twentieth-century use of the terms 'Philosophy', 'Science' and 'Theories' is not definitely settled. It could not be precise because the interrelation between philosophy, science and theory is one of the fundamental problems in the present crisis of scientific thinking. This is not to say that there is complete disagreement about the use of the three terms.

The term 'theory' has been derived from the Greek word 'theoria', which means a well-focussed mental look taken at something in a state of contemplation with the intention to grasp or understand it. Karl Deutsch in his famous book *The Nerves of Government* (1963) defines a theory as an attempt to explain, order and relate disjointed data; identifies what is relevant; and points out what is missing in any phenomenon predicted on the basis of observable facts. 'Theory' is always used to designate attempts to explain phenomena, especially when that is done in general and abstract terms. The theory may be 'scientific' or 'non-scientific' according to whether or not scientific rules are followed. In explaining phenomena, a theory may refer to some general 'law', in the sense of 'regularity', or to several such laws. These laws may have been discovered earlier; the theory may be referring to them as known.

The theory may consist of the suggestion that some previously hidden general law explains the respective events. New theories often combine references to long-established laws with the suggestion of some additional law. Therefore, a 'theory' is