

Evolution of Political Theory

The English word 'theory' originates from the Greek word 'theoria', which suggests a well-focused mental look. It means 'looking at', 'gazing at', or 'being aware of'. Political theory was initially formulated in Greece —the land of enlightenment and knowledge in ancient times. Emphasizing on the contribution of the Greeks to the realm of knowledge, it is often said that 'excepting the blind forces of nature, nothing moves in this world which is not Greek in its origin'. While in the Eastern countries, political philosophy intermingled with religion and mythology, it were the Greeks who, for the first time, separated politics from the fetters of religion and superstition by giving it the character of an independent science. They differentiated politics from mythology, theology and ethics. For this reason, political theory is described as the invention of the Greeks.

Political theory is concerned with three types of statements—empirical statement, logical statement and evaluative statement. Its major characteristics are as follows:

- It is concerned with the field of politics only.
- Its methods include description, explanation and investigation.
- It aims at building a good state in a healthy society.
- It is descriptive and explanatory, and therefore attempts to explain, evaluate and predict political phenomena.

Political theory is a very wide and comprehensive subject. There is no agreement among the political scientists with regard to the scope of political theory. There are various political theories, such as orthodox political theory, liberal political theory and Marxist political theory. Political theory is also closely related to other social sciences. Some writers treat the history of political ideas as a contribution to political education and attempt to trace the evolution of political science from the time of the Greeks. Others seek to discover the principles of political science that would provide knowledge of political phenomena and a basis for sound political decision. Frederick Pollock, a late nineteenth century writer, presented the history of political theory as the history of the science of politics. In his view, one of its principal functions was that of critical expositions. Its chief purpose was not to revive the corpus of past erudition but to make today's life more vivid and to help us envisage its problems with a more accurate perspective.