

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

Political theory plays a vital role in explaining the history of political thought, use of technique of analysis, conceptual clarification and formal model building. It is scientific, philosophical and dynamic with a clear objective of achieving a better social order.

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1.2.1 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.

NOTES**Dunning's Contribution**

William A. Dunning's three volume study, *A History of Political Theories*, was published between 1902 and 1920. Dunning's contribution did a great deal to establish the tradition of political theory as a distinct discipline. In a way, it shaped the basic concerns and assumptions that would dominate for the next few decades. Dunning's work was indeed the prototype of a genre that promoted the analysis of classic works, explaining them in their historical contexts from Plato to the present. For Dunning and his followers, research in the history of political theory and the practice of empirical political science were complementary efforts. Despite fundamental differences among scholars with regard to what constituted proper historical data, inductive history was seen as a key to a science of politics. The history of political theory was seen to be at the heart of this enterprise.

Dunning, while acknowledging his debt to his predecessors, lamented that inadequate attention had been given to the history of political theories. He described them as the successive transformations through which the political consciousness of men had passed. He argued that these transformations pointed toward a science of political society. He was convinced that an in-depth study would yield both contemplative and manipulative political knowledge. He ended his long study with a consideration of the evolutionary philosophy of Herbert Spencer. He also praised Auguste Comte for having generalized from the past, the elements of progress in civilization and in specifying the method and utility of history.

According to Dunning, political theory consisted not only of political literature but also of the operative ideas. He found such ideas implicit in the legal institutions of the state and the political consciousness of a society. He envisaged a pretty definite and clearly discernible relationship between any given author's work and the current institutional development. He emphasized an interpretation of the development of political theory in its relation to political fact. He attempted to demonstrate that modern political institutions and political science in the West were the culmination of an evolutionary process that began with the Ancient Greeks.

Dunning believed that political theory as well as political consciousness began with the Greek masters. The Greeks had explored the entire height and depth of human political capacity and were the first to outline the principles, which at all times and circumstances, must determine the general features of political life. Moreover, the Greek thought on political authority contained substantially all the solutions ever suggested. Despite some gaps, in its concrete expression, there is an evidence of progress in theory since the time of the classical Greeks. This progress is apparent in areas like the views about slavery, representative democracy, a clear distinction between state and society and modern concept of sovereignty.

Since the turn of this century, there has been a visible consensus on the role of political theory. It is to develop the concepts and principles of a scientific political science. In this respect, the history of political theories is closely related to political fact. They are not only dependent upon and evoked by objective conditions, but they also reflect the actuating motives of political events and scientific understanding. In