LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY

WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Printed by
USI PUBLICATIONS
2/31, Nehru Enclave, Kalkaji Ext.,
New Delhi-110019
for
Lovely Professional University
Phagwara

SYLLABUS

Western Political Thought

Objectives

1. This paper studies the classical tradition in political theory from Plato to Rawls with the view to understand how the great Masters explained and analyzed political events and problems of their time and prescribed solutions.
2. The paper aims at the comparison of the ideas of different Political philosophers and theorists.
3. The legacy of the thinkers is explained with a view to establish the continuity and change within the Western political tradition.

Sr. No.	Description
1	**Plato:** Republic, ideal state: theory of justice, communism, education
2	**Aristotle**: Organic theory of state, classification of states, theory of revolution
3	**Niccolo Machiavelli**: Separation of ethics from politics, State craft
4	**Thomas Hobbes**: Individualism, social contract
5	**John Locke**: State of nature and Natural rights and property, Social contract theory
6	**Jean-Jacques Rousseau**: Human nature, social contract, general will
7	**Jeremy Bentham**: Utilitarianism, theory of state and government
8	**Friedrich Hegel:** Dialectics, theory of state and freedom
9	**Karl Marx**: Historical materialism and class struggle, Dialectical materialism, Theory of surplus value
10	**John Stuart Mill:** Theory of liberty, representative government

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Unit 1: Plato's Life, His Ideal State and Theory of Justice

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Know about the Republic
- Understand Plato's Ideal State
- Evaluate Plato's Theory of Justice.

Introduction

In the history of political thought no thinker evoked the admiration, reverence and criticism that Plato (428/27-347 BC) did. This outstanding Greek philosopher has left behind many important works, out of which three, the *Republic*, (380-370 BC), the *Statesman* (360 BC) and the *Laws* (350 BC), are of perennial interest to all those interested in the history of political ideas. Plato has been generally regarded as the founder of philosophical idealism by virtue of his conviction that there is a universal idea in the world of eternal reality beyond the world of the senses. He was the first to formulate and define political ideas within a larger framework of a philosophical idea of Good. He was concerned about

> ... human life and human soul or human nature, and the real question in it is as Plato says, how to live best ... what is the best life?... is to him inseparable from the question, what is [the] best order or organization of human society (Nettleship 1967: 5).

Plato perceived political philosophy as an architectonic science of society, and like Socrates (469-399 BC) and the Sophists, distinguished the political from the other dimensions of life. Within the European intellectual tradition he conceptualized the disorders and crises of the actual world and presented to his readers a vision of a desirable political order, which till today fascinates his admirers and detractors. He has been described as a poet of ideas, a philosopher of beauty and the true founder of the cult of harmonious living. He has been praised for his denunciation of crass materialism and brutish selfishness. Both Francois-Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694-1778) and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) characterized Platonism as the intellectual side of Christianity (1955). Many like John Ruskin (1819-1900) and William Morris (1834-1896) were attracted by Plato's concern for human perfection and excellence. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) exclaimed ecstatically

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> Plato is philosophy and philosophy is Plato for out of Plato comes all things that are still written and debated among men of thought ... . Burn the libraries for their value in this book.

Plato has been credited for laying the foundations of Greek political theory, as he explored, analyzed and covered a wide range of philosophical perspectives and issues, on which the Western political tradition rests. Aristotle, a critic of Platonic ideas in the Republic, rejected many of them, but extends Plato's formulation in the *Laws*. It is for this reason that Whitehead, paying the most fitting tribute to Plato stated that the entire European philosophical tradition is nothing but a set of footnotes to Plato.

While Plato's admirers have been numerous, he has had his share of critics too, beginning with Aristotle. Most of his recent critics have been in the twentieth century within the liberal tradition. They assailed Plato for his hostility towards progressive, humanitarian and democratic ideals, and regarded him as the philosophical forerunner of modern day totalitarianism, which itself is a twentieth century phenomenon. Paradoxically, the liberals in the nineteenth century were more appreciative of Plato, claiming him to be a liberal of that period.

1.1 Life Sketch

Plato was born in May-June 428/27 BC in Athens in a distinguished, aristocratic, though not affluent, family. His father, Ariston, traced his ancestry to the early kings of Athens, even to Poseidon, the God of the Sea. His mother, Perictione, was a descendant of Solon (640-559 BC), the famous lawgiver of Athens. Perictione's brother Charmides and uncle Critias were among the 30 tyrants who ruled Athens after its defeat in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC). Plato had one sister (Potone), two brothers (Adeimantus and Glaucon), and one half-brother (Antiphon).

He was known for his good looks and charming disposition. He excelled in the study of music, mathematics, poetry and rhetoric. He fought in three wars and won an award for bravery. He never married.

It was natural that the trial and execution of Socrates in 399 BC proved to be a turning point in Plato's life. The last discussion that Socrates held was immortalized in *Crito*. Plato could not attend the discussion on account of illness. It should be noted that Socrates was not the only one to be executed. There were others too. Both Anaxagoras (500-432 BC) and Protagoras (481-411 BC) were banished from Athens, and subsequently Aristotle too would have met a similar fate had he not gone into exile.

Plato met Socrates in 407 BC at the age of 20 and since then was under his "hypnotic spell". So decisive and persuasive was the influence that he abandoned the idea of becoming a poet.

In 404 BC Athens witnessed an oligarchic revolution led by Plato's relatives. At this time Plato took an active part in politics, from which he withdrew later following the restoration of democracy, the death of Critias and Charmides, and the execution of Socrates. He left Athens and fled to Megara, where he took refuge with Euclid (300-260 BC), the renowned geometrician. From Megara he went to Egypt to study mathematics and the historical traditions of the priests. He returned to Athens in 395 BC and for the next few years fought for the city of Corinth. In 387 BC he visited the Pythagorean philosopher, mathematician and political leader Archytas at Taras in the south of Italy.

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Did u know? Plato's real name was Aristocles, which meant the "best and renowned". He was given the nickname "Plato", derived from *platys*, because of his broad and strong shoulders.

In 386 BC, on returning to Athens, Plato's friends gifted him a recreation spot named after its local hero Academus, or Hecademus. It was here that Plato established his Academy, which became a seat of higher learning and intellectual pursuits in Greece for the next one hundred years. The academy was not the first of its kind, for there were others, like the Pythagorean school of Crotona established in 520 BC and the School of Isocrates in 392 BC, but it was perhaps the most well-known.

The Academy was initially a religious group dedicated to the worship of Muses and its leader Apollo. The academy, like the Pythagorean School admitted women. Mathematics which included arithmetic and advanced geometry, astronomy, music, law, and philosophy were the main subjects for study. The importance of mathematics was clear from the inscription at the portals of the academy, "medeis ageometrtos eisito", or "let no one without geometry enter here". "It is noteworthy that modern Platonists, with few exceptions are ignorant of mathematics, in spite of the immense importance Plato attached to arithmetic and geometry, and the immense influence they had on his philosophy". The close link between mathematics and philosophy that Plato began was followed by others, like Hobbes and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832).

The Academy concretized the possibility of a science of knowledge with which one could reform the world. Plato saw in the academy a training school for future philosophic rulers. The *Republic*, composed at this time, served as its prospectus. Teaching in the Academy was imparted through lectures, Socratic dialectics and problem-solving situations. For Plato, the search for truth was not through mere instruction and theoretical knowledge, but with the guidance of an advanced mind. Through the academy, Plato kept alive the Socratic legacy. In course of time the Academy also became the prototype for subsequent universities and institutions of higher learning.

> The founding of the Academy is a turning point in Plato's life and in some ways the most memorable event in the history of European science. It was the culmination of his efforts. It was a permanent institution for the pursuit of science by original research.

Plato devoted the bulk of his time and energies in organizing and managing the Academy. In 367 BC he visited Sicily on the invitation of Dion in order to make the late king Dionysius' nephew and heir, Dionysius II, a philosopher king. However, Dionysius resented Plato's assertion that geometry held the key to statecraft, forcing Plato to return home. In 361 BC Plato made another visit, with a view to securing the recall of Dion, now in exile, and to bring about reconciliation between Dion and Dionysius II. Plato was sold as a slave and was released only after the payment of a ransom.

Plato spent the last years of his life at the Academy, teaching and instructing. He died in 347 BC while attending the wedding feast of one of his students. As merry making continued past midnight, Plato decided to catch up with some sleep, retiring to a corner in the house, never to wake up. In the morning the revellers realized that he had died. On hearing the news of his death, the whole of Athens came to pay respects to one of its most distinguished and erudite citizens.

1.2 The Republic

The *Republic* is the greatest and most well-known work of Plato. It was written in the form of a dialogue, a method of great importance in clarifying questions and establishing truth. It was one of the finest examples of the dialectical method as stated and first developed by Socrates. Though

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Socrates did not provide a theoretical exposition of the method, he established a clear-cut pattern of dialectical reasoning for others to follow. He placed dialectics in the service of ethics, defining virtue as a basis for rational and moral transformation. He used the method to secure answers about human beings and society, and not nature. "Political philosophy emerged by way of an ethical question which nature could never answer; the problems of men were not strictly coterminous with the problems of nature" (Wolin 1960: 30).

The discussions in the *Republic* were conducted in a single room among Socrates, Cephalus and his son Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, Glaucon and Adeimantus. Cephalus, Polemarchus and Thrasymachus appeared in Book I, while the discussion in the later books was carried on by Socrates and Plato's two brothers. In fact, Socrates was the main spokesman.

The *Republic* in Greek meant "justice", and should not be understood in its Latin sense meaning "the state or the polity". It began with the quest of understanding the Idea of Good, and explained how a perfect soul could be developed. Its core has been succinctly summarized as follows.

> Philosophy meant to him what it meant to his master. The Socratic philosophy, analyzed and formulated in the early dialogues, was not the study of nature or logic or metaphysics; it was the pursuit of wisdom, and to achieve wisdom would be to achieve human perfection, well being and happiness. This again meant not merely "caring for one's own soul" as an isolated individual, saving himself and leaving society to its fate. Human excellence, as Plato and Aristotle after him always maintained, is the excellence of an essentially social creature, a citizen. To produce this experience and consequent well being is the true end of the "Royal Art" of statesmanship. Hence the life of philosophy and the life of the active statesman ought not to be, as they appeared to Callicles, alternative careers, but a single life in which all the highest powers of man would find full expression. Society could be saved only by reuniting the two elements which had been drifting apart.

The book explored the notion of justice and its realization within the individual and the state. It sketched a detailed picture of the polity and social institutions, with a view to attaining human excellence and perfection. It had an elaborate scheme of education, which led Rousseau to comment that it was hardly a political work, but the finest treatise on education ever written. It contained a detailed examination of the meaning of good life and outlined the means to achieve it.

> In the repuhblic practically every side of Plato's philosophy is touched upon or developed, and its range of subject matter is such that it may be said to deal with the whole of human life. It has to do with the good man and the good life, which for Plato connoted life in a good state, and with the means for knowing what they are and for attaining them. And to a problem so general no side of individual or social activity is alien. Hence the *Republic* is not a treatise of any sort, nor does it belong to politics, or ethics, or economics, or psychology, though it includes all these, and more, for art and education and philosophy are not excluded.

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The Republic is a book which defies classification. It fits into none of the categories either of modern social studies or of modern social science.

1.3 Ideal State

In recent years, there have been doubts about Plato's seriousness in implementing the Ideal State. Strauss (1964) considered the *Republic* as the greatest critique of idealism ever written. It was a satire written with the purpose of demonstrating the limits of what was politically feasible. This

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was because the ideal state was unrealistic and unrealizable, for the philosopher was not a natural ruler and governing was thrust upon him in the larger interest of the community. Therefore "... the *Republic* conveys the broadest and deepest analysis of political idealism ever made".

Randall (1970: 116-165) pointed out that the *Republic* was a comic irony written with the purpose of demonstrating that the Spartan model was absurd and unworkable. Bloom (1968), agreeing with Strauss, contended that:

Political idealism is the most destructive of human passions and the *Republic* is the greatest critique of political idealism ever written .... The *Republic* serves to moderate the extreme passion for justice by showing the limits of what can be demanded and expected of the city (Bloom ibid: 408-410).

Strauss and Bloom asserted that Plato did not show a relationship between the two aspects of justice, namely psychic harmony and happiness (*eudaemonia*), at least in the case of the philosopher ruler. There was no proof that ruling would promote the happiness of the philosopher ruler, nor were there compelling and convincing reasons for the philosopher to renounce a life of contemplation and take to ruling. They challenged the traditional viewpoint of Barker (1964: 277-284), Cassirer (1946: 70-73), Cornford (1945: xxxv), Nettleship (1967: 211-215), Sabine (1973: 51-56) and Sinclair (1951: 57-59) which contended that the philosopher ruled out of a sense of duty to do good to others, and regarding the good of others as extended self-interest.

Sabine, explaining further, pointed out that Plato made two fundamental assumptions which were interrelated. These were: (*a*) that government ought to be an art depending on exact knowledge; and (*b*) that society existed for the mutual satisfaction of needs by persons whose capacities supplement one another. While the first was intrinsic to human personality, the second referred to education and experience. In view of these two assumptions, Plato was convinced that if ruling was entrusted to experts who could be trained, then governance would be above mediocrity and expediency. Political leadership was both an art and a science. Good governance would confer a dynasty of political rulers who could meet every contingency, rather than have occasional premiers of the people. It would eliminate factionalism and petty groupism in politics. Ruling, for Plato, had to be in accordance with the true dictates of moulding and transforming the state and individuals in light of an absolute standard. Political philosophy had to prevent incompetence and knavery in public life. The philosophers' vision of the Forms and Good was a moralizing experience, and that explained their commitment to the Ideal State of which they were the architects. It supplied the state with an active probing critical intelligence. For Plato every individual had a social side. Besides ensuring his own good, a philosopher must also be useful to society, for it was only within a society that an individual realized his true self. The philosophers ruled in order to prevent victimization at the hands of inferior rulers.

1.4 Theory of Justice

One of the most fundamental ethical and political concepts is justice. It is a complex and ambiguous concept. It may refer to individual virtue, the order of society, as well as individual rights is contrast to the claims of the general social order.

An ideal state for Plato possessed the four cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance or self-control and justice. It would have wisdom because its rulers were persons of knowledge, courage because its warriors were brave, self-control because of the harmony that pervaded the societal matrix due to a common agreement as to who ought to rule, and finally, justice of doing one's job for which one was naturally fitted without interfering with other people. For Plato, the state was the Ideal, of which justice was the reality. Justice was the principle on which the state had to be founded and a contribution made towards the excellence of the city.

The central question of the *Republic* was the meaning of justice or right conduct or morality. It did not refer to legality. Plato critically examined contemporary views on justice and then defined the

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concept. Subsequently, he elaborated the application of the concept and its realization within an individual and the state. Justice in the individual was defined analogously to justice in the state.

Different Definitions of Justice

The text opens with a discussion between Socrates and Cephalus on the subject of old age and wealth. Cephalus, old and prosperous, pointed out that wealth by itself did not make one happy, but provided comforts that made life easy. It enabled one to lead a good life and to do what was morally right. Cephalus defined justice as telling the truth, being honest in word and deed and paying one's debts.

Socrates dismissed the argument effortlessly by pointing out that in some cases it might be harmful to speak the truth or return one's belongings, through examples like returning weapons to a mad person, or telling the truth when it was better to conceal it. He did not show that honesty in word and deed was not justice, but rather that such honesty could be harmful. Since all his listeners tacitly accepted the (unstated) argument that justice had to be beneficial, or at least not harmful, he was able to persuade them that Cephalus' view would not be acceptable.

At this point, Cephalus gave up, but the argument was continued by his son Polemarchus. By altering the definition provided by Cephalus, Polemarchus pointed out that justice meant "giving each man his due" or "what was fitting". In short, justice was "doing the right thing", which he qualified to mean doing "good to friends and harm to enemies". Polemarchus reiterated an acceptable part of Greek morality as evident from Solon's prayer, "May I be pleasant to my friends, hateful to my enemies", though this certainly contradicted the teaching in the *Sermon on the Mount*.

With the help of three arguments, Socrates demolished the views of Polemarchus. First, helping friends might also involve ignoble acts like stealing and telling a lie. Second, the idea of being good to friends and bad to enemies was difficult to apply, because a person could make mistakes about one's friends and enemies. A supposed friend might not actually be a friend in reality. Moreover, a person who could do the maximum help could also do the maximum harm. Third, a just person should not harm anyone because those who get injured become even more unjust. Justice was human excellence, and a just person could not harm anybody, including the self. Once again, Socrates did not disprove the concept, but only its application. He merely persuaded Polemarchus to accept what he was saying. Polemarchus could have retorted that spanking a child or a pet dog might not be harmful (from which he refrained, perhaps out of civility). In fact, nowhere did Socrates provide a proper and clear description of Good.

The discussions continued with an interjection from Thrasymachus, a Sophist. After making sure that he would be paid a fee, he agreed and defined justice or right as the interests of the stronger party, namely the ruler. While the strong made all the rules, the weak—the subjects—merely obeyed them. Thrasymachus explained his notion as follows:

> Each type of government enacts laws that are in its own interest, a democracy democratic laws, a tyranny tyrannical ones and so on; and in enacting these laws they make it quite plain that what is "right" for their subjects is what is in the interest of themselves, the rulers, and if anyone deviates from this he is punished as a lawbreaker and "wrongdoer". That is what I mean when I say that "right" is the same thing in all states, namely the interest of the established government; and government is the strongest element in each state, and so if we argue correctly we see that "right" is always the same, the interest of the stronger party.

Socrates responded by pointing out that rulers might make mistakes by not being able to identify their interests and frame laws contrary to their advantage, thus putting Thrasymachus in a tough spot. Instead of following Clitophon's advice to redefine justice as "whatever the strong believe to be in their interest", Thrasymachus made things difficult by charging off in the wrong direction. He replied that rulers by definition could not make mistakes, and if they did so they could no

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longer remain rulers. He asserted that an unjust life was stronger and better than a just one. Thrasymachus conceded that justice ought not to be in the interest of the stronger, but that was the normal practice and there were plenty of examples to substantiate it.

Through a series of analogies, Socrates showed that justice was *not* the advantage of the stronger, for the ruler's duty was to serve the interests of the people. A ruler's position was similar to that of a doctor, teacher or shepherd. Any art, which included ruling, should be for the welfare of the object, and *not* the subject.

By defining justice as the interest of the stronger, Thrasymachus earned a place in the history of political theory. The fact that Socrates was unable to refute the argument was perhaps an acknowledgement of the fact that it was the strongest who set the standards in society.

Glaucon and Adeimantus were still unconvinced with the arguments furnished by Socrates on the causes of injustice. They argued that individuals were not willingly just, but only out of necessity, in which case injustice was better than justice. Glaucon pointed out that all customary rules relating to religion and morality were imposed on individuals by social sanction, which originated in human intelligence and will. They were based on a tacit consent of the parties. These were conventions which could be altered, changed or repealed by legislative bodies. A law emerged whereby the strong and the weak contract with each other; the strong agreed not to inflict wrong, and the weak accepted not to suffer injustice.

Adeimantus, extending Glaucon's argument, pointed out that existing religious values and education taught the young that injustice was good because of the rewards it brought, thus convincing them that the ideal would be injustice clothed in good reputation. Thus, while "Thrasymachus concentrated on the role of power in defining values, Glaucon was concerned to emphasize the importance of law in any consideration of justice".

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Both Glaucon and Adeimantus challenged Socrates to show that justice was intrinsically good and reflected an inward quality of the soul, rather than the rewards and good reputation it brought.

At this point Socrates became more constructive, and replied with the help of examples. Using the method of large letters, he said that anything written in big and bold, in contrast to something written in a small size, would receive more attention. Similarly, in order to understand the meaning of justice, one could see its application at the level of the state and then in the individual. Both Glaucon and Adeimantus agreed with this suggestion.

Justice in the State and Individual

Socrates examined the origin of states and cities, and pointed out that they arose out of two reasons. The first was mutual need, and the second, the differences in aptitudes of individuals. Mutual need led to reciprocal services, since the individual was not self-sufficient and depended on others for subsistence. Exchange of services necessitated division of labour and functional specialization, which was possible since individuals differed in their nature and aptitudes. Individuals could be trained to specialize and perform one particular task. Specialization was encouraged to bring about excellence and perfection. It was not to assign any kind of superiority or snobbery to one particular function. It was essentially to recognize and bring to fruition the uniqueness in every individual. Acceptance and organization of diverse human aptitudes would result in social benefit, cooperation and harmony.

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Plato made two important points here. The first was that every individual was a functional unit, assigned a particular task with clear-cut obligations and privileges, which one was expected to perform diligently and meticulously. It also underlined the fact that none were born to render a specific function. Certain levels of training and skills were required. Moreover, since everybody would be involved in the performance of a socially required function, it would minimize, if not altogether eliminate, the probability of being a free rider or a shirker. Second, society was visualized as a harmonized, orderly whole, based on the recognition of individual talents and contributions. The functions of a society were broadly three—ruling, defence and production. The last one included all kinds of trades and crafts.

Plato was the first to picture political society as a system of distinctive or differentiated roles ... each represented a necessary function; each was defined in terms of its contribution to sustaining the whole society: each bore rights, duties, expectations which provided definite guides and signposts for human behaviour and defined the place of the individual within the system. The harmonization and integration of these roles made a political society a functioning interdependent whole. To maintain it required a sharp demarcation among the three classes of the community ... no confusion of roles, no blurred identities. From Plato onwards, one of the distinctive marks of political philosophy was its approach to political society as a functioning system (Wolin 1960: 33).

Theory of Three Classes and Three Souls

Plato explained his arguments for differing individual capacities with the help of the theory of three classes and three souls, an idea borrowed from Pythagoras. He pointed out that every human soul had three qualities: rational, spirit and appetite, with justice as the fourth virtue, architectonic in nature, balancing and harmonizing the other three qualities. He took psychological disharmony among the constituent parts into consideration.

In each soul, one of these qualities would be the predominant faculty. Individuals in whom the rational faculty was predominant would constitute the ruling class, and the virtue of such a soul was wisdom. This soul, a lover of learning, had the power to comprehend the Idea of Good. Those in whom spirit was the predominant quality were the auxiliaries or warriors, and the virtue of such souls was courage, implying the ability to hold on to one's convictions and beliefs in adverse times. Together, the rulers and soldiers would constitute the guardian class. Socrates compared a spirited or *thymotic* individual to a watchdog, capable of great bravery, public spirit and anger while fighting strangers in defence of one's city. It indicated the willingness to sacrifice one's material desires for the sake of the common good. Such a soul was a lover of honour and victory. It was basically a political virtue necessary for the survival of a community and ought to be kept under control. *Thymos*, an ally of reason, was a distinct quality representing self-worth and dignity:

> Plato's *thymos* is therefore nothing other than the psychological seat of Hegel's desire for recognition ... . *Thymos* appears to be related to a good political order in some way, because it is the source of courage, public spiritedness, and a certain unwillingness to make moral compromises ... . A good political order ... must satisfy man's just desires for recognition of his dignity and worth.

Individuals whose souls were appetitive exhibited a fondness for material things. They were lovers of gain and money. These were the artisans, the producing class. The quality of such an appetitive soul was temperance, though Plato did not see temperance as an exclusive quality of the artisan class. He considered it as being necessary for all individuals. Using a Pythagorean analogy between a tuned string, a healthy body and an alert mind, Socrates considered a balanced individual as a just one. He reasoned that in the application of intelligence to activity of any kind, supreme wisdom was to know just when and where to stop. A fool or a quack lacked this knowledge. The underlying idea was that in everything it was important to ensure the "just right" in order to achieve happiness.

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Though Plato took into account the role of spirit and appetite in human behaviour, he was convinced that reason must ultimately control and direct emotions and passions. This explained why the rational soul embodied in the philosopher ruler would govern. Unlike Socrates, Plato took into account the irrational aspects of the soul, for the individual was not exclusively rational:

> Thus Plato's conception of virtue centres on psychological harmony. In the just soul each element stays in its own place and performs the task to which it is naturally suited. The result is a condition analogous to the health of the body. The chief benefit of justice is that it allows this condition of psychological harmony to come into existence and to be maintained in his soul (Klosko 1986: 69).

The parallel between the state and the individual led to a problem which Plato did not solve. While in an individual, desires and passions were restrained by reason, Plato was ambivalent when describing the state. He insisted that the artisans and producers would be willing to subordinate themselves to the guardians. He was uncertain about how long this subordination would last. He even recommended the use of force and rhetorical persuasion. With so much control and monitoring, it was doubtful whether the Ideal State could be a happy one.

Justice in the individual meant that every individual was assigned a place in society according to one's natural aptitudes and skills. In other words, justice meant departmental excellence. Furthermore, justice was psychic harmony, balancing and ordering the three elements in accordance with the dominant one. For Plato, restraint was the key to proper development and societal harmony. It also represented a bond that cemented ties between the individual and society. In this sense, justice was social. A just individual was also a good person. His purpose was to show 'how ought we to live' and tried to establish the relationship between virtue and happiness. Plato developed the answer to how ought to live 'based on unusually rich account of our nature and the nature of reality'. Plato gave three arguments in favour of why a just life was a happy one. First, a just individual limited his desires, for non-satisfaction of desires led to unhappiness. Second, only a philosopher could differentiate between the pleasures derived from the pursuit of reason, and those obtained from appetite and sensuality. Third, pleasures derived from the intellect were more genuine and comforting than those derived from the senses.

Justice in the state meant that the three social classes (rulers, warriors and producers) performed the deliberative and governing, defence, and production, without interfering with the functions of the others. Justice was "one class, one duty; one man, one work". Plato drew a parallel between the three social classes and the three elements of the human soul. Each soul had a corresponding social class. A just society recognized and educated every individual talent according to the dominant element in one's soul, and ordered these elements into coherent classes. The rulers and soldiers constituted the guardian class. Plato visualized society:

> ... as a system of services in which each member both gives and receives. What the state takes cognizance of is this mutual exchange and what it tries to arrange is the most adequate satisfaction of needs and the most harmonious interchange of services. Men figure in such a system as the performers of a needed task and their social importance depends upon the value of the work they do. What the individual possesses, therefore, is first and foremost a status in which he is privileged to act, and the freedom which the state secures him is not so much for the exercise of his free will as for the practice of his calling.

Plato understood injustice to mean interference and meddlesomeness. Any interchange in jobs between the three social classes would bring harm to the state and was the worst evil. On the contrary, if the rulers, auxiliaries and artisans performed their respective tasks, then such a state would be just. Plato's conception of justice was distributive, giving what was due to an individual, namely good training and skills, in return for proper discharge of one's responsibilities. A Plato's conception could be represented as follows:

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Virtue	Soul	Class
Wisdom	Rational	Rulers
Courage	Spirited	Soldiers
Temperance	Appetitive	Artisans

Myth of Metals and of Earth-born

Plato sustained his arguments that individuals differed in their capacities and nature with the help of a "noble or a royal lie" which would be uttered by the lovers of truth, the philosopher ruler. The Myth of Metals and of the Earth-born rationalized the fact that all human beings were born of earth, and their bodies were mixed with different metals; the philosophic-rational ones were made of gold, the spirited-courageous ones of silver, and the appetitive ones of bronze. The myth explained and justified individual and class distinctions in a manner that was comprehensible to a lay person. The myth was necessary to sustain the Ideal State, by convincing everyone of their rightful place in society, and the obligations their stations in life entailed. It also suggested that in spite of their differences, all individuals were born of the earth.

Plato recommended that the philosopher ruler, who was entrusted with the task of assigning the different roles to the individuals, propagate the myth in the best interest of the community as a whole. Nietzsche criticized Plato for founding a just and a rightly ordered society with the help of a necessary lie. In Plato's arguments, the usefulness of the social ordering never became clear. The myth, according to Nietzsche, was fabricated by Plato not merely to protect philosophy from political persecution, but also to give philosophy its political influence.

What Plato does not seem to realise is that the compulsory acceptance of such myths is incompatible with philosophy, and involves a kind of education which stunts intelligence.

The abuses of the myth far outweighed its uses. It led to rigid class divisions where the ruler was made to look superior to the ruled. This was justified on the basis of race, education and scale of values. Since Plato deliberately ignored the conception of justice as equality before law (a widely prevalent view at that time), this was done with the purpose of convincing his readers that the Ideal State was indeed "just". Equalitarianism and humanitarianism, accepted as ideals by Athenian democracy, undermined his belief in natural privileges, his anti-individualism, and above all the fact that the state was to exist for the welfare and freedom of its individual citizens.

For Plato, human faculties were not hereditary. An individual's functional role in society was determined by his own natural aptitude, and not by parental lineage. To ensure that the parents did not manipulate to get the best for their child, they were made to give up their child to the state, which in turn would categorize and educate him in the appropriate faculty that he was endowed with. Social mobility between the classes was assured. This in itself was a revolutionary step, considering that all ancient societies were stratified, and Athens was no exception. But Plato, in his eagerness to radically restructure the existing arrangements, proposed a more "fair" scheme, where the hereditary became important to discern individual endowments, but not beyond that. Once the identification was made, every individual could hope to find a rightful place in tune with his talents.

The apparently just arrangement was controlled by the guardians. They would decide and place individuals in accordance with their nature. However, no remedial steps to prevent manipulation by the guardians themselves were suggested. Very likely, the means would defeat the end. While Plato's critics castigated him for subordinating the interests of individuals to the requirements of the social whole, for his admirers the "polis and individual soul was subject to a common Form of righteousness; and the individual is no more subordinate to the polis than the polis is to the

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individual". On balance, his critics were right, for the individual's development retained meaning only if it was socially useful. For achieving social ends, individuals were denied their freedom and privacy, and subjected to excessive regulation of their lives. Plato's society was inherently elitist and meritocratic. He tacitly assumed that it would be possible to find the right person for every available job, and one could anticipate the economic requirements of society and plan accordingly.

Self-Assessment

Choose the correct option:

1. Plato's work 'The Republic' published in ..... .
   (*i*) 380–370 BC (*ii*) 360 BC (*iii*) 340–350 BC (*iv*) None of these
2. Friendrich Wilhelm Neitzsche characterised Platonism as the intellectual side of ..... .
   (*i*) Islam (*ii*) Farzi (*iii*) Christianity (*iv*) Yahudi
3. Plato met Socrates in 407 BC the age of ..... .
   (*i*) 20 (*ii*) 25 (*iii*) 28 (*iv*) 21
4. In ..... Athens witnessed an obligarchia revolution led by Plato's relatives.
   (*i*) 405 BC (*ii*) 300–260 BC (*iii*) 400 BC (*iv*) 432 BC
5. Justice in the state meant ..... social classes.
   (*i*) Rulers (*ii*) Warriors (*iii*) Producers (*iv*) All of these.

1.5 Summary

- Western thought, one might say, has been either Platonic or anti-Platonic, but hardly ever non-Platonic.
- Plato was the first systematic political theorist, and a study of the Western philosophical tradition begins with his masterpiece, the *Republic*. He was the first to create a body of writing that spanned many areas—art, epistemology, ethics, language, love, mathematics, political theory, religion and science. He was credited for establishing philosophy as a unified and complex discipline, proposing radical solutions to the political community and human life. Utopian thought in the West also begins with Plato. While the *Republic* would always remain a timeless classic, Plato influenced successive generations of followers with his the *Statesman* and the *Laws*, for Aristotle made the latter two the starting point of his inquiry.
- The *Republic* dealt with the question of achieving justice in society. In answering this question, it focused on other interrelated themes, like the right kind of life, the nature of human beings, the purpose and goals of political association, the ideal type of political system, the classification of constitutions, the need for good, upright rulers, and the nature and meaning of knowledge.
- Plato emphasized that a good political community was one that promoted the general well-being of all its citizens. An important feature of such a society was the strong sense of community that its members shared. No one was favoured at the expense of the other. All were granted a fair share in the benefits. The philosopher ruler was the right kind of person to rule, for he was least interested in capturing power or making money. With a number of allegories like master-slave, shepherd-sheep, Plato tried to replicate automatic command and obedience as a model of the ruler-subject relationship, which, however was rejected by Aristotle on the ground that a political relationship, unlike others, was based on equality. Interestingly, this argument of Aristotle was reiterated by Locke in his critique of Robert Filmer (1588-1653) and patriarchalism.

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- The rulers, being enlightened despots, were given absolute powers but were put under strict regimentation through collective households and property to ensure that they did not use their privileged positions to exploit the rest. The artisans were denied political participation, but were allowed to retain their families and property. Since the average person failed to understand the meaning of what constituted the good, it became necessary for the political leader to educate him. Moreover, Plato insisted that rulership, like any other skill, required specialized training and apprenticeship. Society benefited if the right person performed the right job to avoid the maladies of a round peg in a square hole. Plato defended this argument deftly with the theory of three classes and three souls, emphasizing the bottom line that a good state, like a good individual, should exemplify moderation in character, thereby possessing the qualities of wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. Plato maintained that justice was good in itself and not only for its consequences. It was valuable as it leads to the happiness of its possessor.
- One of the casualties of the argument for specialization of skills was political participation by the average individual. Plato was critical of the Athenian democratic practice that distinguished between government based on law and one subjected to human will, preferring the former, for it guaranteed moral equality of individuals and consent by the governed.
- At all events the ideal state ... was simply a denial of the political faith of the city state, with its ideal of free citizenship and its hope that every man, within the limits of his powers might be made a sharer in the duties and privileges of government .... Plato's omission of law from his ideal state cannot be interpreted otherwise than as a failure to perceive a striking moral aspect of the very society which he desired to perfect.
- Plato's Ideal State has been both an inspiration and a warning for subsequent efforts in Utopian projects. Thomas More's (1478-1535) *Utopia* (1516), Fra Tomaso Campanula's (1568-1639) *The City of Sun* (1602), and Francis Bacon's (1561-1626) *The New Atlantis* (1627), were patterned on the lines of the *Republic*. Plato's attempt cautions us against utopianism, for utopianism has led to totalitarianism. At the heart of a Utopian project is the chimerical idea of finality, which is inherently incompatible in a world that is essentially pluralistic and not amenable to complete solutions. Any effort to depict a perfect blueprint is not only methodologically unsound, but also politically dangerous. It is not possible to foresee everything and plan accordingly. Assuming that total planning is possible (like Plato and other Utopian theorists suggest), who is to plan the planners? Utopianism is politically dangerous, for it ignores and abuses individuality, liberty, plurality, tolerance, freedom of choice and democracy.
- In a world of rapid change with history compressed, any radical programme of social action and utopianism is ill-equipped and inadept to cope with stresses and shocks, thus becoming a dinosaur. It is with the help of realistically conceived and practically feasible theories emphasizing moderation, gradualism and majoritarianism, that change which is permanent and swift, can be addressed. In realizing this essential fact, Aristotle scored over Plato, as his realism proved to be much more enduring and valuable than Platonic idealism, which remained unrealizable and impracticable.

1.6 Key-Words

1. Poton : Plato's Sister
2. Adeimantus and Glaucon : Plato's brother
3. Antiphon : Plato's half-brother

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1.7 Review Questions

1. Discuss the life of Plato.
2. Analyse briefly Plato's ideal state.
3. Explain the theory of justice by Plato.
4. What is Plato's ideal state?
5. Write a short note on the Plato's the Republic.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) 2. (*iii*) 3. (*i*) 4. (*iii*) 5. (*iv*)

1.8 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Unit 2: Plato's Communism and Theory of Education

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Know Theory of Education
- Discuss the Concept of Communism
- Understand Plato's Second best state.

Introduction

Platonic justice demands for its realization proper intellectual and material environment. A man must in a spirit of devotion to the state give his best to the state in his own particular station in life. Plato believed that a state-regulated system of education could best create that spirit of devotion and that excellence in the performance of public duty which was demanded of every citizen. Public education was therefore a direct corollary of Platonic Justice. To Plato, education did not mean the storing up of external knowledge but the bringing of the soul into proper environment for its development. The eye must be turned to the light. Education, whose object is to create right surroundings and environment, is a life-long process. Plato believed in the perfectibility and plasticity of human nature.

Plato believes that the true life of an ideal citizen is a life of discipline a life of contemplation of fundamental things of life, one of loving truth for its own sake. He is refreshingly first modern in some of his views. He is a true and possibly the first feminist because he lays down emphatically that the qualities of citizenship which he has enumerated would cover women too. He makes mention of women supervisors for his ideal city-state. Here he was in diametric opposition to the other Greek thinkers.

Plato believed the functions of the state to be very positive. The state could promote justice and right action and prevent crime by providing mens sana in corpore xano, which could be done by a proper system of education, intellectual and physical. To Plato, therefore, education was the most important function of the state and the department of education the most important of state departments. Plato attached more importance to education than either Aristotle or any other Greek thinker did. First among human things, *i.e.*, reckon education of Antiphon would as soon have come out o Plato's lips. In outlining his system of education, Plato took his inspiration from Sparta rather than his own city-state, Athens. He disliked the lack of organization in Athens and

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declared that as in Sparta the educational system should be under the direct and strict control of the state. His system of education was more disciplinary than that of any other Greek educationist. It applied to both men and women. Education culminated in the realization of the Idea of Good. Education was calculated to promote justice and to enable a man to fulfil his duty. Plato, therefore, held that the function of education was to make a man, or a woman for the matter of that socially and economically useful and fit.

The Platonic course of education was systematic and progressive. In childhood, the important thing was not so much the imparting of knowledge as the cultivation of a certain type of attitude towards things and men. In youth, education should be both physical and intellectual. Here came in music for the soul and gymnastics for the body. In the last, *i.e.*, the adult stage, education was to be general and vocational. Education must help the individual to discover his or her true vocation in life.

His communism of wives would be impracticable in a modern nation-state and communism of property hardly less so. But we must realize that Plato was writing about an ideal city-state and must not be judged by the standards applicable to modern states. His emphasis on justice and functional specialization, his feminism and his eugenics are features of everlasting interest in his political philosophy. Many of them the conceptions of the middle ages are traceable to the Republic. Sir Thomas Moore's Utopia makes references to the Republic and advocates communism of property and emancipation of women.

2.1 Theory of Education

Plato felt that the education system of his time was in need of reform. He wished to reform it according to the principles laid down in the Republic, so that not only a systems or curriculum was altered but a man's (or woman's) outlook itself.

The ideal State ruled by the philosopher was made possible through an elaborate and rigorous scheme of education. The state was wholly constructed around the scheme of education, in the belief that if the state performed its task of conducting and supervising education properly, then it would succeed. Plato looked to education as an instrument of moral reform, for it would mould and transform human souls. Education inculcated the right values of selfless duty towards all, and was therefore positive. It helped in the performance of one's functions in society and in attaining fulfillment. Thus, education was the key to the realization of the new social order. The seriousness with which Plato regarded education could be gauged by the attention and meticulous care he paid to it. Large portions of Books II, III and X were devoted to it. The community of wives and property was confined to a few paragraphs at the end of Book III. Community of wives and property was suggested only to remove the distortions which the education was not able to prevent.

> The one sufficient thing is the guardians' education: if they are well educated, they will see to everything. Education was more important than community of wives and property because it tries to cure the ills at the source while communism tries to prevent distractions that may corrupt the soul.

Commentators took note of the importance Plato assigned to education in the Ideal State. As already stated, Rousseau described the *Republic* as the finest treatise on education to be ever written. His *Emile* (1762) was in response to the suggestions made by Plato with regard to education of men and women. Education offered a cure for all problems, including those that were insoluble. It usurped the whole subject matter of legislation. It offered a formula for dividing work and achieving harmonious cooperation.

Plato considered the state as an educational institution, and called it the "one great thing". The stress on education was derived from the Socratic belief that "virtue is knowledge", namely to know good

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was to do good, and like his master, emphasized the need to cultivate one's soul. Impressed by the results of state-controlled education in Sparta, Plato duplicated the same for Athens. An important deficiency in the Athenian curriculum was the lack of training in martial arts that would prepare the individual from childhood to the service of the interests of the state. Besides, education in Athens, unlike Sparta, was left to the family and private schools and for this neglect, Athens paid a price as she allowed rule by the ignorant and inefficient statesmen. Plato attempted to balance the two contrasting models. The education system drew from Athens values of creativity, excellence and individual achievement, which it tried to integrate with that of Sparta, namely civic training.

From Athens came the individual aspect which Plato hoped to integrate with the social side that he borrowed from Sparta. This is because Plato believed that human beings must be inculcated not only with knowledge but also civic sense:

> Plato's plan of training represents therefore an Athenian, not a Spartan, conception of what constitutes an educated man. Any other conclusion would have been unthinkable for a philosopher who believed that the only salvation for states lay in the exercise of trained intelligence.

For Plato, the human soul was capable of learning as long as it lived, hence education would be a lifelong process. Knowledge was to be acquired for the sake of perfection and excellence. Its goal was to turn the "inward eye" with the help of "right objects towards light". For Plato, the mind was active, capable of directing itself towards objects of study, and if nurtured properly, it was capable of becoming totally receptive to objects from the environment. Plato moulded and established the right environment to ensure that the soul got attracted to things that were beautiful, and then moved towards beauty itself. Thus, while he was a craftsman of individual souls, he was equally attentive to crafting the environment in which the soul grew and developed:

> Platonic education is primarily a moulding of souls ... . Plato holds that the virtue of anything, including the soul, "is a matter of regular and orderly arrangement". It is the function of education to produce such order, which is a necessary condition for the virtue based on correct opinion and a necessary precondition for the virtue based on knowledge. Whereas Socrates, who views the soul as basically rational, sees education as a wakening of thought, Plato believes education to be concerned as much with the non-rational elements as with the rational (Klosko 1986: 118).

Right and proper education could be achieved under the tutelage of an able teacher who stimulated and encouraged thought to bring out the best in the pupil. In his scheme of education, Plato integrated the Pythagorean idea of the immortality and transmigration of souls with a lifelong plan of education. He believed that the human soul was a repository of human knowledge acquired through previous births, with the capacity to remember.

These reminiscences were like flashes that occurred in a mind stirred by the objects that were placed before it.

Plato's elaborate system of education brought forth the crucial importance and interdependence of nature and nurture in shaping human character. He accepted that individuals differed in intelligence and capacities, which were determined at the time of birth. They were permanent, but within their limits, individuals could be moulded. The way an individual led a life, whether happily or unhappily, was determined by upbringing. Talent and training were both required to bring out the best in an individual. For centuries, scholars remained divided on the issue whether nature or nurture played the determining role in shaping human beings. Many stressed that individuals were born with a basic nature which remained unchanged throughout life. On the other hand, many held that given the right training and environment, individuals transcended the disadvantages of their birth. In recent years, scholars have reiterated Plato's belief that nature and nurture exerted equal influences on the development of a human being:

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> Neither will do without the other; you cannot create the required nature, but you can by nurture do everything. Short of that, and without the proper nurture the best nature is likely to turn out ill as to turn out well.

Plato was also confident that young minds could be shaped, if directed properly. He stressed the tremendous receptive potential of the human mind, which was why early education played a crucial role in the overall development of the individual. At this point, the educator might try and train the individual to restrain desires, for control and harnessing of non-rational aspects of the soul was an important prerequisite for the full development of the rational. Elementary education helped to attain the first goal, while higher education ensured the development of a rational soul.

Elementary Education

Plato recommended a state-controlled, compulsory and comprehensive scheme of education in two phases: In the first phase, elementary education that would be confined to the young till the age of 18, followed by two years of compulsory military training and then higher education the second phase for the selected persons of both the sexes who would be members of the ruling class, from the age twenty to thirty five. In doing so he promoted two aims: first to ensure universal literacy and second adequate and proper training for the members of the ruling class in the state. While elementary education made the soul responsive to the environment, higher education helped the soul to search for truth which illuminated it. It trained the human eye to respond slowly to the glow of pure light through strict discipline and hard work. Elementary education enabled the individual soul to develop fullness of experience, both theoretical and practical. It trained the human mind in moral and aesthetic judgement. It developed the physical body to be healthy and athletic.

Both boys and girls received the same kind of education, far beyond the physical distinctions. Plato did not find any difference between the sexes in talents and skills, thus making a subtle criticism of the secondary status accorded to women in ancient Greece. The theme of women's participation in politics was the main subject of one of the comedies of Aristophanes (447-385 BC) *Women in Parliament* (*Ecclesiazusae*) which discussed the status of women as early as 393 BC. Plato followed Aristophanes.

Elementary education consisted of music and gymnastics, designed to train and blends the gentle and fierce qualities in the individual and creates a "harmonious person". Gymnastics provided poise to feelings, and tempered spirits. It involved the training of the body for the sake of the mind. Music tried to soften the spirit by developing the nascent power of reason. It inculcated the power of right opinion. The rhythm and diction of poetry, the sound of musical instruments, the shades, colours and shapes of art not only gave an artistic sense, but also carried with it a moral suggestion, a love for doing the right thing. It would uphold the social practice of each individual doing one work, without being a busybody. It was to instill values of simplicity, justice, conformity to a single principle and acceptance of austere life:

> And so we may venture to assert that anyone who can produce the perfect blend of the physical and intellectual sides of education and apply them to the training of character is producing music and harmony of far more importance than any mere musician's tuning of strings.

Plato recommended censorship of literature and music to encourage the virtues necessary in the guardian class, for denuding the spirit and making reason supreme. Censorship of poetry, stories and tales was undertaken to ensure that the impressionable young minds were not exposed to harmful ideas. Plato forbade Lydian and Ionian harmonies, for they expressed sorrow and lethargy respectively. Only Dorian and Phrygian ones were permitted, for they inculcated courage and temperance respectively. He prohibited the reading of Homer and Hesoid, for they showed gods behaving badly on certain occasions. Their poems made readers fear death, did not reflect the importance of decorum, and discouraged temperance by praising the rich feasting and other lusts

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of gods. Plato was particularly insistent that children not fear or hate death; otherwise they would not develop courage needed on the battlefield. He recommended that children be made to sit on horseback and taken to the sight of actual war, so that they develop a fearless attitude towards death. Children were to be told stories about gods and great persons to ensure their good moral upbringing. Plato's idea was to shut off all vice and ugliness from the life of a young person.

The principles that governed the selection of poetry, literature and musical instruments, also dictated the selection of other forms of art: painting, weaving, embroidery and the making of furniture. He prescribed strict diet control, with the purpose of imbibing what Pericles considered "love of beauty without extravaganza, of culture without softness". None would eat fish or cooked meat, sauces or confectionery. Roast meat was allowed. The diet would be such that none would fall sick. These measures aimed to bring about poise of feelings, control of emotions and a harmonized social being. The environment had to be made beautiful and harmonious, because of the indelible impression it left on the soul:

> We shall thus prevent our guardians being brought up among representations of what is evil, and so day by day and little by little, by grazing widely as it were in an unhealthy pasture, insensibly doing themselves a cumulative psychological damage that is very serious. We must look for artists and craftsmen capable of perceiving the real nature of what is beautiful, and then our young men, living as it were in a healthy climate, will benefit because all the works of art they see and hear influence them for good, like the breezes from some healthy country, insensibly leading them from earliest childhood into close sympathy and conformity with beauty and reason.

Did u know? Plato permitted the playing of simple musical instruments: the lyre, the cithara and shepherd pipes.

Training in the right virtues through stories and the like would create the perfect members of the guardian class. With such a beginning, advancement towards right conduct became more pronounced as one grew older.

Education in arts would be followed by two years of compulsory military training. The guardians were perfected as professional warriors. Luxury and self-indulgence were prohibited with the purpose of strengthening the spirit, without making it rigid or harsh. Plato reiterated the Athenian practice which provided for compulsory military service between the ages of 17 or 18 and 20. Elementary education perfected those souls who were receptive to habit and conditioning. These souls would become auxiliaries.

Higher Education

At the age of 20, a selection was made. The best ones would take an advanced course in mathematics, which would include arithmetic, plane and solid geometry, astronomy and harmonics. Arithmetic was necessary, for it used "pure intelligence in the attainment of pure" truth". Truth, for Plato, resided in Thought and not in sense particulars. Besides this philosophical value, arithmetic had a practical value too, namely the use of numbers. Warriors were to learn the use of numbers in order to arrange the troops. Arithmetic, because of its philosophical and practical use, was studied by the best. Geometry helped in the choice of positions and methods of tactics. It helped in easily acquiring the vision of the Idea of Good. Astronomy and harmonics had the same value as arithmetic and geometry. Astronomy was not merely restricted to observation of heavenly bodies, nor was harmonics a learning to discriminate notes by ear, but both tried to elevate the mind from sense perceptions and cultivate the power of reason. Higher education was to cultivate the spirit of free

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intellectual enquiry.

Those who did not qualify to join this exclusive category of esoteric minds would become soldiers, and form the second tier of the ruling elite. The first course in the scheme of higher education would last for 10 years. It would be for those who had a flair for science. At the age of 30 there would be another selection. Those who qualified would study dialectics or metaphysics, logic and philosophy for the next five years. They would study the Idea of Good and the first principles of Being. They would receive partial experience for ruling. They would accept junior positions in military and political life till the age of 35. This period would last for the next 15 years. By the age of 50, the philosopher ruler was fully equipped. He would devote the greater part of his time to contemplation and philosophy, along with political obligations. Since he would have grasped the idea of Good, he would be in a position to do good to the community. Since Plato subjected ruling to scientific training, he was categorical that only those perfect in true knowledge could make good rulers, for they would ensure the good of others:

> Behind training lies the need of knowing what to teach and what to train men to do. It cannot be assumed that somebody already has the knowledge which shall be taught; what is more urgently needed is more knowledge. The really distinctive thing in Plato is the coupling of training with investigation, or of professional standards of skill with scientific standards of knowledge. Herein lies the originality of his theory of higher education in the *Republic*.

What they sought was rather a frame of mind which will respond in a just, responsible and self manner to public issues". Both believed that education would be an effective remedy for corruption and instability that affected the states of their time, by injecting into the citizens a sense of rights and obligations. They were convinced that a system of education controlled and regulated by the state would teach the citizenry the traditions and laws of the state. For Plato:

> ... the educational system serves both to under grid and sustain the idea of political order and to provide a ladder, so to speak, up which those who have the capacity can climb to escape the contingencies and limitations of political life. These two purposes, according to Plato, are not contradictory. Rather they do support and sustain each other. Without political order, the life of contemplation would be impossible, for conflicts and near chaos would be forever interfering with the calm required for study and mystic experience. Without study and mystic experience, the wisdom necessary to sustain the political order would be lacking.

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The true goal of education for both Plato and Aristotle was to inculcate the values of civic virtues. They framed an educational curriculum that would impart "a moral liberal education rather than a study of political science.

2.2 Communism (Community of Wives and Property)

While education, for Plato, was designed to create the proper environment for the nurturing and development of the human soul, the community of wives and property tried to eliminate all the negativities that obstructed the proper growth of the individual. Since the stress was on creating a meritocratic society in which every individual would perform tasks appropriate to one's nature, the community of wives and property ensured that nepotism, accident, family ties and pedigree or wealth would not be the criteria of selection for social stations and their assigned tasks. It ensured that since governance was a selective and specialized function, only the best and deserving would

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make it. The rulers of this kind would pass off the benefits of good ruling to the rest of society that stood disenfranchised.

Politics did not mean promoting one's personal interests. Instead it was to promote the common good. Plato thereby established a high standard for governing and governors.

Did u know? Plato abolished private family and property for the guardian class, for they encouraged nepotism, favouritism, particularism, factionalism and other corrupt practices among rulers.

Plato proposed that the members of the guardian class live together in common, like soldiers in a barrack. They would not possess any gold or silver. They would only have the small amount of property that was necessary. None would own a house or storeroom, namely an exclusive private space. They would receive a fixed quota from the producing class, depending on what was required for subsistence. The life of the guardians would be in accordance with the rule followed among the Greeks that "friends have all things in common".

In the *Republic*, Plato devoted greater space and consideration to community of wives than to property. This was because he was perturbed by the negative emotions of hatred, selfishness, avarice and envy that the family encouraged. He disliked the exclusivity that the private family fostered in its members. In addition, he was dismayed by the secondary position women held within the family, confined to perform household chores.

The Platonic scheme was based on the premise that women and men were identical in natural endowments and faculties. Like Pythagoras, he accepted that men and women did not differ much and that they should be treated equally. Following Aristophanes' proposal in *Ecclesiazusae*, Plato accepted women as legislators and rulers. There were two distinct ideas that were embedded in Plato's community of wives: reform of conventional marriage, and emancipation of women. To achieve these, he proposed abolition of permanent monogamous marriages and private families. These were restricted to guardian women alone.

Conventional marriage led to women's subordination, subjugation and seclusion. He rejected the idea of marriage as a spiritual union or sacrament or bond based on love and mutual respect. However, marriage was necessary to ensure the reproduction and continuation of the human race. He, therefore, advocated temporary sexual unions for the purpose of bearing children. He relieved women of child rearing and child care responsibilities.

Plato proposed strict regulation of sexual intercourse, which was to be performed in the interest of the state by ensuring that the best and the fittest of human stock were made available. The philosopher ruler would decide on sexual unions:

> There would be as many unions of the best of both sexes, and as few of the inferior as possible ... . No one but the Rulers must know how all this is being effected; otherwise our herd of Guardians may become rebellious ... we must then institute certain festivals at which we shall bring together the brides and bridegrooms ... the number of marriages we shall leave to the Rulers' discretion ... . I think they will have to invent some ingenious system of drawing lots, so that, at each pairing off, the inferior candidate may blame his luck rather than the rulers.

Men and women were freed from permanent marital ties, not with the purpose of encouraging sexual promiscuity, but, rather for securing the greatest good of the community. Abortion was recommended for illegitimate children, those that were not sanctioned by the state or were the result of mating by persons beyond the prescribed age limits.

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Did u know? Plato viewed the ideal age for marriage to be between 25 and 55 for men and 20 and 40 for women. He forbade relationships between mothers and sons, and between fathers and daughters.

Once children were born, they would be taken care of by the state-maintained nurseries, which would be equipped with well-trained nurses. Except for the philosopher ruler, none would know the parentage of these children. Even the biological parents and their children would be oblivious of their relationship, the idea being that all children would be respectful towards their elders in the same way as they would, had they been their parents. Conversely, all elders would shower equal love and affection on all the children, as if they were theirs:

> Each generation of children will be taken by officers appointed for the purpose, who may be men or women or both—for men and women will of course be equally eligible for office ... . These officers will take the children of the better Guardians to a nursery and put them in charge of nurses living in a separate part of the city: the children of the inferior Guardians, and any defective offspring of the others, will be quietly and secretly disposed of.

Plato's meritocratic society gave very little importance to birth. He did not believe that skills and talents were hereditary which passed from one generation to another. Through mock marriages, rigged lottery and eugenics, individual aptitudes would be sifted and classified, ensuring high standards of excellence. Eugenics has been popular with many diverse schools like the Fabians, Nazis and the idea of superman influenced thinkers like Nietzsche. True, as Plato suggested, disposing of invalids and deformed babies w3s common in the animal world, but it seemed insensitive to apply the same in the human world, which prides itself as being compassionate and benevolent. It was also heartless of Plato to propose that medicines were to be abolished to prevent prolongation of the lives of extreme and chronic invalids.

Plato did not mention the institution of slavery. Far from abolishing it, he merely regarded it as unimportant. Being a universal institution on which the Athenian/Greek economies were based, he could not conceive, like Aristotle, that it would be temporary and would change with new modes of technology.

Critical Evaluation

While Plato's scheme may apparently seem liberating, it implied excessive regimentation with very little privacy and individuality. In trying to ensure that family life was not corrupted with narrow sectarianism and selfishness, Plato went to the other extreme and eliminated the emotional bonding that the family provided.

Plato certainly challenged some of the cherished conventions within human society. Many of his critics were disturbed by these proposals. Aristotle was the earliest of those who disagreed, giving a detailed reason as to why the family and private property were important for the happiness of the individual and the welfare of the state. Both Grube (1935) and Taylor (1926) dismissed Plato's proposals as abhorrent for they did not take into cognizance the deepest human emotions that marital and family life involved. Strauss (1964) reiterating Aristotle looked to the family as a natural institution and questioned Plato's wisdom in abolishing it. However, Plato's defence of the abolition of private households and monogamous marriages found strong adherents among the early socialists like Saint Simon, Owen and Fourier.

Plato insisted that a temperate attitude towards property was necessary for the security and well-being of the state. Too much acquisitiveness and love for one's possessions ruined unity, harmony and moral goodness of the state. Plato clearly perceived the disastrous consequences of combining

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economic and political power on purity and efficiency, for that would bring about corruption and split the state in two. Thus, Plato was the first to understand the implications of the role that economic factors play in politics, for excessive wealth and poverty would be ruinous to the health of the state. He was aware of the constant civil strife in Greek cities. He blamed inequality as a cause of political instability and social upheaval.

Plato permitted the third social class to enjoy private families and property, but that would be under the strict control and supervision of the guardians. He subordinated both the guardians and the artisans to a moral ideal: the welfare of the state and the collectivity. While the guardians were entrusted with the task of ruling and governance, they would lead strict, austere lives. The artisans did not have the right to participate in the political process, but enjoyed emotional ties and had possessions. Plato played fair with both the sections of the society in terms of rewards and denial. The characteristics of the Platonic Ideal State were class, communism, civility, control, contentment and consensus.

Plato's communism was ascetic, similar to the life found in a monastery, though many see this as a forerunner of modern-day socialism. Communism was more than common ownership of property: it symbolized different types of economic management. It conceived of society free of exploitation and oppression, based on social justice, equity, freedom and democracy.

2.3 Regeneration of the Ideal

Having outlined the details of an Ideal State, Plato examined other types of regimes, accounting for their decline and decay. He listed four: timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny. Each of these regimes had a, corresponding type of human being. The eventual fate of all regimes was tyranny. Though he described how regimes declined into tyranny, he did not explain how they could recover from tyranny.

Plato's account of historical change was pessimistic. He held that anything that came into being would degenerate. He was aware that a chain of creation, decay and dissolution gripped the world firmly, and it was only at rare intervals that individuals could snatch a brief moment of seeming immortality.

The concluding note of Plato's political science is not of an unlimited arrogance that man can fashion a polity untouched by time, but of a heroism chastened by the foreknowledge of eventual defeat. It is, in Shelley's words, "Eternity warning Time" (Wolin 1960: 68).

The failure to regulate reproduction signalled the first departure from the Ideal State. Succeeding generations lacked the talents of their parents, and coupled with neglect of the process of education, there was a decline in the quality of the ruling class. The new rulers would value wealth and money-making activities, marginalizing the wise and the intelligent.

Timocracy was characterized by the love of victory and honours, ambition and passion to excel in war and money-making.

The next regime was an oligarchy, a state ruled by the wealthy few. It came into being when individuals gave more attention to wealth and money-making and less to virtue. Society got divided into the super-rich and the very poor. The lust for wealth undermined the rule of law and principle of moderation. The poor revolted against such decadence, and the result was a democracy. Democracy was characterized by licence, wastefulness, insolence, anarchy and the democratic man gave more importance to his desires and appetites. There was no order or restraint. Quantity rather than quality was the main criterion honouring all values on an equal basis. Pleasures were measured more for their intensity and duration, rather than their intrinsic and differentiated merit. Democracy deteriorated into tyranny. The tyrant made his people creatures of his will, confiscating their labour. Too much licence led to servitude, and people were willing to make themselves virtual slaves in return for security.

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For Plato, there were three law-abiding states, and their corresponding corrupt and lawless states. The rule of one yielded monarchy and tyranny; the rule of a few, aristocracy and oligarchy; and the rule of many included moderate and extreme democracy. For the first time, Plato conceded two kinds of democracy, and made it the best of the lawless states, though the worst of law-abiding states. Both forms of democracy were better than oligarchy, and even monarchy, tacitly admitting the importance of popular participation and consent in the polity.

Did u know? In the *Statesman*, Plato divided the states into lawful and unlawful states, a classification that Aristotle adopted when he spoke of good and perverted forms of government in his *Politics*.

2.4 Plato's Second-Best State

While the ideal or perfect state remained the one ruled by the philosopher ruler as the epitome of reason and untrammelled by general rules, in the *Laws* Plato described what he regarded as his second-best state. It was perhaps hindsight that the philosophical ideal was unattainable, for it made excessive demands on the state as an educational institution, and neglected laws which were products of experience. This led Plato to examine the place of law in a state.

In the *Laws*, government by law was supreme, applying equally on both the ruler and the subject. The law-bound state would be a polity that combined the wisdom of monarchy with liberty for the purpose of stability, harmonizing and balancing opposite political principles and practices. The task of the lawgiver was to blend the two. Laws must be prolific, dealing with the specific details of possible and potential conflicts between public and private interests. Since private property was permitted, laws were to involve minute regulation.

The city would consist of 5040 households, with each family having an equal plot of land as their inalienable right. The most worthy child would inherit the land, and excess children would be turned over to those families where the number was few. If the city got populated, it could think of schemes of colonization. Meanwhile, it would try out birth control methods to control undue increase in population. In general, every man was expected to marry by 35; otherwise he would have to pay an annual fine or tax. It was ironic that such a suggestion came from a person who never married.

Both the *Republic* and the *Laws* spoke of the need to curtail the ugly consequences of inequality and economic power. Wealth was accorded an inferior position. The disparity between the possessions of the richest and the poorest was to be in the ratio of four to one. Through ancestral acquisition the limit on poverty was to be decided, and no man was allowed more than four times this value. If by trade or other means an individual acquired more, the excess reverted to the public treasury. All citizens were to register their possessions with a public agency, and records were to be kept open for public inspection. There were to be strict regulations on gold and silver. Metals only in the form of money were permitted, expressing Plato's distaste for usury.

The economy of the *polis* was to be subordinated to the requirements of both body and soul. Plato looked to division of labour as the ordering principle, with slaves performing agriculture, free men who were not citizens looking after trade and industry, and the citizens exclusively doing political functions. Both the economy and the polity would reflect the principles of a mixed or blended constitution. All those eligible and fit for military service would vote for the selection of the guardians of the law. The first 300 candidates would be selected through an election. Through a second ballot, this number would be reduced to 100. From these 100, approximately one-third (37) would be 'chosen in a third election. There would be a nocturnal council consisting of the 10 eldest

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members. Of the 37 guardians, the director of education and certain priests were chosen for their virtue. This council was above the law, with powers to control and direct all legal institutions of the state. The nocturnal council was similar to the philosopher ruler of the *Republic*. Through an elaborate process, the council of 360 persons would be chosen. Candidates would be chosen by the entire citizen body from each of the four classes into which the city had been divided on the basis of wealth. Here Plato reiterated the divisions made by Solon and Cleithenes (515-495 BC). In the second election, all citizens would reduce the candidates from each class to 180. Finally, 90 would be selected through a system of draw of lots from each of the four categories. Plato believed that the political system should reflect the economic divisions of the city. With regard to public appointments, Plato recommended the blending of aristocratic nomination and popular elections.

Plato also looked to the topography of a city. The ideal was a self-sufficient agricultural community capable of sustaining a rugged and temperate populace. He believed that a common race, language, law and religion were desirable, but did not place undue emphasis on them. He reiterated his inherent distrust and dislike for commercialism and industrialism.

Like the *Republic*, even in the *Laws* Plato looked to education as holding a decisive position, both with regard to the maintenance of the *polis* and the improvement of laws. The guardians of the law were to appoint a committee of women, who, through persuasion and gentle pressure, would see to the strict adherence of marriage laws, so that reproduction was kept under control. In the case of a couple having no children, divorce was recommended after 10 years of marriage. Certain members of the committee would act as matrons, supervising the very young and the nurses. The child began formal education at the age of three, and till six would receive flexible training. The emphasis again was to develop the "natural" talent as far as possible. At the age of six, the two sexes would be separated, but both boys and girls would receive a long public education under teachers paid by the *polis*.

Plato reiterated the need for training in music and gymnastics, similar to the recommendations in the *Republic*. He also recommended rigorous censorship of literature and art, equal educational opportunities for women, and compulsory education for all. However, he gave greater attention to religion which would be regulated and supervised by the state. He forbade any kind of private religious exercises that undermined the unity of the state, and advocated performance of public rites by authorized priests. In the process, he undermined the influence of disorderly religion that held sway over women and hysterical persons. For Plato, religion provided a set of rules of conduct and was closely linked to one's moral behaviour. He recommended harsh penalties, including death for atheists. Laws would be both educational and coercive. As tools of education, they would teach the individual how to live best, and as instruments of coercion, they would compel those who refused to obey.

Self-Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Plato listed four types of states: Timocracy, Oligarchy, Democracy and ..... .
2. Higher education was given at the age of ..... .
3. Plato viewed the ideal age for marriage to be between 25 and 55 for men and ..... for women.
4. Thymos, an ally of reason, was a distinct quality representing ..... .

2.5 Summary

- Plato's society was highly structured, ordered, hierarchical, regimented and meritocratic, where everyone was expected to perform the duties that were allotted. Unlike Smith, Plato did not view division of labour as a economic matter. Specialization was a fundamental

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moral and social principle which would govern the Ideal State. He ruled out wealth, gender and birth as criteria for distributing privileges and favours. Theoretically, children born in one class could reach the top but that was more an exception than the rule. Plato's classification was similar to the rigid caste distinctions practised in ancient India. However, his classes were not castes, for membership in them was not hereditary (Sabine ibid: 63). Society was sustained by a rigorous educational system and the science of eugenics. A glaring shortcoming is the silence on the institution of slavery in the *Republic*. This does not mean that Plato abolished the institution. Slavery was the basis of Greek economies. It is interesting that until Campanella, all Utopias presupposed slavery.

- Education would craft out every individual according to his potential, thus emphasizing the importance of nurture and training. The science of eugenics, conducted with utmost secrecy and careful selection of the mates, would ensure that genetic endowments were carefully transmitted to the children, thereby underlining that nature and nurture together shaped and formed an individual. Heredity was important to the extent that it supplied the raw material, but it was training and discipline that made possible the complete development of an individual. It conveyed the optimism of human excellence and perfection, though it expressed very little faith in the qualities of the average person. While education in arts was more a reform of the Athenian curriculum, the scheme of higher education was the most innovative. Plato overlooked the positive side of Athenian education, namely its creativity, all round excellence and human versatility. The fact that Plato recommended state-controlled compulsory education implied that he rejected its privatization and commercialization. Plato was convinced that good education would result in the overall improvement of society and that "if education is neglected, it matters little what else the state does".
- Interestingly, since Plato, this idea has remained a cornerstone of Western societies. Even the guru of laissez faire and the minimal state, Smith, insisted that education, along with defence, and law and order, should be under the control of the state. The success of East Asia is largely due to a widespread, compulsory, state-controlled education system. Eugenics was prescribed with a view to preserving purity and quality, emphasizing that few were better than the many, thus suggesting racial overtones (Popper 1945: Vol. I). Society was strictly controlled with the help of censorship in art and literature and diet restrictions.
- Plato was the first to allow women to become rulers and legislators. His scheme of collective households, temporary marriages and common childcare were accepted as necessary conditions for the emancipation of women by the socialists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But he was not a feminist in the modern sense in which the term has been used, namely giving women an equal and independent status with rights.
- He understood individuality within a social context, and equality within a social stratum. He advocated sexual equality with the purpose of utilizing women's resources for the benefit and development of the community as a whole. However, it was to his credit that he was the first to point out that any sexual discrimination had to be justified.
- The whole bent of Plato's thought was the welfare and development of the community. Adeimantus, provoked by the startling proposals relating to family and property for the guardian class, stated that the guardians would not be happy by these strict ascetic measures but Plato pointed out that the happiness of the whole community and not of a particular class was the aim. Furthermore, Plato pointed out that the happiness of the guardians were not being sacrificed for the happiness of the society. Despite being an anti-individualist, he made a strong defence for the individual— "his justice, his security and his freedom from want, uncertainty and ignorance". One could discern a devotion to the individual as well as a devotion to the state in his political writings. The state was not repressive, but the source

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of virtue and individuality. It was the foundation of moral life. According to Plato, self-interest was morally dangerous and harmful as it corrupted individuals and perverted social life. The Ideal State however precluded plurality, for diverse allegiances led to inevitable and intolerable conflicts. The Ideal State, with unity as its goal, was projected as an essential precondition for both order and genuine freedom.

- The problem for Plato, as it was to be the problem for Rousseau two thousand years later, was that of discovering the conditions within which the absolute freedom of the individual could be combined with absolute justice of the state.
- Plato's political theory affirmed absolutes and permanent truths, against the ethical relativism of Heraclitus and the democratic upsurge in Periclean Athens. His dialogues "are the earliest and the most fertile source of discussion of ultimate values, efforts to question conventional morality" (Berlin 1978: 3). This quest to find the ideal and perfect manifested itself in the form of rule by an aristocracy of intellect, suggesting that any deviation from the ideal represented degeneration, imperfection and therefore was evil. He desired to arrest all change, for he conceived a perfect state to be static and unchanging (Popper 1945). Philosophically, he combated Heraclitan logic by invoking a mystical distinction between the intellect and sense; politically, he countered the democratic temper by defending an aristocracy of philosopher rulers. His state, apparently radical, actually embodied the values of a conservative aristocracy, like order, stability, meritocracy and rule by the few.

2.6 Key-Words

1. Thymos : Dignity
2. Timocracy : A state being governed on principles of honour and military glory.

2.7 Review Questions

1. Critically examine Plato's Theory of Education.
2. Explain the importance of community of wives and property in Plato's Ideal State
3. Briefly describe Plato's Communism.

Answers: Self-Assessment

(*i*) Tyranny (*ii*) 20 (*iii*) 20 and 40 (*iv*) Self-worth and dignity

2.8 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Unit 3: Aristotle's Life and His Conception of Human Nature and State

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss about life and works of Aristotle
- Understand the Conception of Human Nature and State
- Explain the Organic Theory of State

Introduction

Born at Stagira in Northern Greece, Aristotle was the most notable product of the educational program devised by Plato; he spent twenty years of his life studying at the Academy. When Plato died, Aristotle returned to his native Macedonia, where he is supposed to have participated in the education of Philip's son, Alexander (the Great). He came back to Athens with Alexander's approval in 335 BC and established his own school at the Lyceum, spending most of the rest of his life engaged there in research, teaching, and writing. His students acquired the. name "peripatetics" from the master's habit of strolling about as he taught. Although the surviving works of Aristotle probably represent only a fragment of the whole, they include his investigations of an amazing range of subjects, from logic, philosophy, and ethics to physics, biology, psychology, politics, and rhetoric. Aristotle appears to have thought through his views as he wrote, returning to significant issues at different stages of his own development. The result is less a consistent system of thought than a complex record of Aristotle's thinking about many significant issues.

3.1 Life Sketch

Aristotle was born in 384 BC at Stagira, which is located on the north-eastern coast of the Aegean Sea. His father, Nicomachus, was a court physician to King Amyntas III of Macedon. The family was affluent. Aristotle developed a long-lasting interest in medicine and biology.

"He had every opportunity and encouragement to develop a scientific bent of mind; he was prepared from the beginning to become the founder of science".

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Not much was known about Aristotle's character and personality, except that he had a sense of humour, was a good speaker and extremely persuasive in conversation. There were many stories about him. One account portrayed him as having squandered his wealth due to self-indulgence, compelling him to join the army to avoid starvation.

In 367 BC Aristotle, 17 years of age, joined Plato's Academy. He remained in the Academy for the next 20 years, first as a student and then as a member of the faculty till 348 BC, and left the Academy for Asia Minor after Plato's death. Very likely, his departure had to do with the issue of succession within the Academy. Besides Aristotle, Speusippus, Plato's nephew, and Xenocrates aspired for the position. Speusippus got it. If loyalty was the matter, then of the three, Xenocrates should have succeeded Plato, for he remained a faithful adherent to Plato's theory. Speusippus too rejected Plato's theory of ideas in its original form. Very likely, the reason was to keep the property within the family and avoid the legal hassles of its transference to a non-Athenian. However, this reason fell flat, for Xenocrates succeeded on the death of Speusippus in 335 BC. Aristotle's decision to leave Athens after Plato's death could be partly because of his strained relations with Speusippus, and partly due to the anti-Macedonian feelings in Athens. Aristotle had close links with Macedon.

In 336 BC, Alexander succeeded to the throne after the assassination of his father, which meant having no time for studies. Aristotle left for Athens. Macedonia emerged as a dominant power in the region. It began to establish an empire, when many Greek cities including Athens came under its shadow, following the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC.

Did u know? Aristotle's trips to Asia Minor got him interested in natural sciences. He met an old friend and an active politician, Hippias, whose niece he married. In 343 BC, Aristotle accepted the offer of Philip of Macedon to tutor the 14-year-old young prince Alexander.

Aristotle established his school, Lyceum, when he was denied an opportunity to head the academy for the second time. From 335 BC till his death, he devoted himself to research, teaching and administrative duties in Lyceum. Lyceum was more than a school or university. It was a public leisure centre, where Aristotle lectured to his chosen students in the mornings and to the general public in the evenings. Being an informal school, it had no examinations, degrees, syllabi, official enrolment and fees.

Aristotle pursued his studies in biology and history in Lyceum. By then, he had collected a large number of biological specimens. Many of them were sent by his students, including Alexander. His students also helped him to collect and compile research material, based on which Aristotle studied 158 constitutions. It has to be noted that amongst his contemporaries, Aristotle had the largest collection of personal books and manuscripts. After Euripides, (480-406 BC) he was the first to put together a library and lay down the principles of library classification. Plato referred to Aristotle's home as "the house of the reader".

Meanwhile, Aristotle's relations with Alexander got strained, reaching a breaking point in 326 BC, when one of his close friends, a philosopher, Callisthcnes, accused Alexander of becoming an oriental monarch. Callisthenes was imprisoned and subsequently killed. Perhaps Aristotle would have suffered a similar fate, but for the fact that Alexander got busy with his plans to invade India. Within Athens, Aristotle's position became precarious, for he was seen as belonging to the pro-Macedonian faction.

Macedonia as an empire under Alexander began to threaten the liberty and independence of small city states that the Greeks had traditionally cherished. Alexander's sudden death in 323 BC was

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followed by a general revolt against Macedonian rule. When Athens declared war on Macedonia, Aristotle thought it was wise to leave the city, not only fearing for his life, but also denying Athens a second chance to commit a crime against philosophy, the first being the trial and execution of Socrates.

Ironically, in spite of his close links with Alexander, and the latter's world conquests, Aristotle remained oblivious of the fundamental changes in the political complexion of the city states. He continued to see the self-sufficient and self-governing city state or the *polis* as his ideal, at a time when the *polis* was in its twilight period, being relegated to history. All this happened over a 16-year period, when Macedonia incorporated the city states into an empire, and Alexander began to forge links between the Greeks and non-Greeks. Curiously, Aristotle's political outlook and belief "did not reflect these changes, nor did he make any effort to combat these. In that sense, "the *Politics* is a retrospective anachronism".

Aristotle spent the last year of his life at Chalcis in Euboea. He died in 322 BC at the age of 62, on account of "chronic indigestion rendered acute by overwork", as certified by his physician.

Did u know? The most well-known of Aristotle's work were the Politics, the Nicomachean Ethics and the Endemian Ethics or on the soul.

Critique of Plato

The influence of Plato on Aristotle was profound and pervasive. Aristotle shared with Plato many of the basic perspectives enunciated in the *Republic*, namely the hierarchy of human nature, justice as a relation or order among parts, and the inevitability of social classes. But he also diverged from his master in several significant ways, namely on the ideal regime, the dimensions of ethics, and the causes of revolution.

On the death of Plato, Aristotle paid tribute to him as a man whom evil men should abstain from praising, and who was the first to demonstrate both in terms of his own life and his writings that it was possible to be, simul-taneously, good and happy. Aristotle was equally appreciative and critical of Plato. Much of his criticism was made when Plato was alive. Though he was the most well-known and the best among the Platonists, he was not a thorough-going Platonist. The fact that Aristotle could differ from his master speaks highly of Plato, who encouraged his disciples to develop a critical perspective, regarding nothing as a sacred cow, including that taught by one's teacher. Aristotle remarked that 'Plato was a friend; Truth was a greater friend'.

Aristotle, like Plato, believed in the unified theory of sciences, but disagreed on how this unity was to be achieved. Like Plato, he was concerned with knowledge as a search for the causes and explanations of things. However, Aristotle, true to his scientific temperament, tried to *explain*, more than merely *observe and record*, data. Plato and Aristotle as logicians were concerned with problems of ontology, providing answers or clarifications to philosophical problems and puzzles. Aristotle learnt in the academy that "knowledge must be systematic and unified. Its structure is given by logic, and its unity rests at bottom on ontology. It is essentially explanatory. It poses deep philosophical problems".

Aristotle did not believe in Plato's optimistic claim that all knowledge could be founded upon a single set of axioms. He recognized the independence of the sciences, but stressed the need for a system. He divided knowledge into three major categories: productive, practical and theoretical. Productive knowledge was concerned with the making of things, for instance rhetoric and poetics. Practical science focused on action, namely how one ought to act in different circumstances with the knowledge that one possessed. Both politics and ethics belonged to this category. Theoretical

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sciences aimed to explore Truth as their ultimate goal, deduced with the help of logic from self-evident principles. Aristotle divided theoretical knowledge into First Philosophy (theology), mathematics and physics. First Philosophy dealt with "being qua being", and examined the nature of first cause. In the Middle Ages, it came to be referred to as metaphysics. Mathematics included arithmetic and geometry. Physics included botany, biology and chemistry. "In spite of its insufficiency, Aristotle's classification exerted a very strong influence upon the whole development of philosophy and science down to our own day".

Aristotle described politics as the master science and art, for it determined the ordering of the sciences to be studied in a state by every class of citizen. Within the ambit of politics came subjects like military science, economics and medicine, which assumed meaning by focusing on the primary or general good of humans.

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Aristotle equated 'Good' with happiness or *eudaimonia*, and was confident that it could be attained through education, a branch of politics.

Aristotle criticized Plato's theory of Forms on three grounds. First, he denied that the "general" could be "substantial". Second, he criticized Plato for making "properties" of things *outside* the things of which they are properties. Third, he questioned Plato for supporting Forms or Ideas as causes of phenomena, when in reality they lacked a moving force. In doing so, he proceeded to distinguish between Matter and Form. Matter was the raw stuff out of which specific things emerged. It was shapeless and undefined. However, within Matter there existed some latent form that differentiated one thing from the other. Form, according to Aristotle, was in Matter and not outside it. Matter was "potentiality", and Form "actuality". The Form within Matter provided definite shape, making it less indefinite and undifferentiated. It should be noted that Aristotle arrived at the conception of relation between Matter and Form as potentiality and actuality by his studies in biology. Having examined and observed the embryos of pigs and cattle, he could state that they did not differ, yet one embryo in normal circumstances became a hog and the other a cow. He explained that this was possible because of the presence of Form within each, which was impressed itself on what appears to be undifferentiated Matter. For Aristotle, while Form gave matter its shape, matter itself was undifferentiated and shapeless. But neither could achieve its actuality without being attached to what he termed as an "efficient" cause. Each Form was itself a reflection of a final cause. The latter provided the form which worked within the matter that was launched by the efficient cause. Extending the Socratic idea, Aristotle contended that a complete account of a thing was possible only if the parts were examined with reference to their implicit purpose or end.

Aristotle's political philosophy was both a critique and a corrective of Plato's ideas. As opposed to Plato's radical reforms in the *Republic*, Aristotle sought to conserve and preserve existing traditions and institutions. This made Aristotle a liberal conservative, proposing realism and gradualism as the best options in politics, subsequently reiterated by Burke and the English Fabians. His principles of the golden mean, advocacy of mixed constitutions, faith in middle-class rule as being best for ensuring a stable and enduring government, conviction of the family being the bedrock of the state, and the necessity of property to ensure self-sufficiency and fulfil the instinct of possessiveness in the individual, indicated his philosophy of moderation and belief in continuity. He "valued individual quality, privacy and liberty above social efficiency and power". Aristotle emphasized conservation and moderation, and these remained guiding principles in his political philosophy.

Aristotle was critical of the scheme of the Ideal State that Plato outlined in the *Republic*. He contended that Plato's emphasis on unity, instead of harmony within a state, would only lead to

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excessive regimentation and the cessation of the state as a political association. A state was essentially a plural and diverse institution encouraging and cultivating a rich social life. Social differentiation was the key ordering principle of a good, stable state. Aristotle pointed out that the absence of plurality of aims and viewpoints did not purify politics. On the contrary it destroyed it. He did not reject the Platonic belief that every political community should be guided by the highest good, but he disagreed with Plato by insisting that a community should recognize and promote other goods as well.

Aristotle proceeded to examine the social institutions that Plato advocated in his scheme of the Ideal State, namely the community of wives and property. The unity that Plato desired, according to Aristotle, was more appropriate for a household rather than for a state. Within a family there were three kinds of relationships, while a state had just one kind of relationship: between the governed and the governors. Unlike the family, the state was an aggregation of different kinds of individuals. Aristotle contended that the role of the statesman could not be confused with that of a slave owner or the head of the family, for the statesman's role, unlike that of the husband and master, was a political one. Aristotle separated the political from the non-political, a distinction which Locke and the liberals subsequently incorporated and made it the cornerstone of liberalism.

As far as the community of wives was concerned, Aristotle felt that the Platonic scheme did not improve traditional family ties, for none would feel responsible for others in the absence of personal care and affection. Altruism was only possible if it was an extension of self-love. The good of the many had to be based on the good of the self. In Plato's scheme, the whole notion of personal love got diluted in the absence of real feeling and due to general indifference and neglect:

> What is common to the greatest number gets the least amount of care. Men pay most attention to what is their own; they care less for what is common; or at any rate, they care for it only to the extent to which each is individually concerned.

Instead of being cared for by one's father, it was quite possible to be ignored by so many "fathers". Furthermore, kinship became merely fractional. If a thousand were fathers to a child, then each father would be merely one-thousandth of a father. Therefore, "it is better to be own cousin to a man than to be his son after the Platonic fashion".

Fraternity, for Aristotle, was important for it would be the best bulwark not only against civil dissensions, but also against deviant tendencies like incest, parricide and fratricide. In order to care and feel affection for a person, it was necessary that a person belonged to one, a feeling that one liked. Under the Platonic scheme, both were totally ruled out. Furthermore, the transposition of ranks that Plato advocated could not be carried through anonymously. For Aristotle, the scheme of community of wives and property would lead to a one-person state, obliterating social differentiation. In the absence of divergent elements making different contributions, even self-sufficiency would be lost:

> A household is an institution which attains a greater degree of self-sufficiency than an individual can; and a *polis*, in turn, is an institution which attains self sufficiency to a greater degree than a household. But it only attains that goal, and becomes fully a *polis*, when the association which forms it is large enough (and diversified enough) to be self-sufficing. On the assumption, therefore that the higher degree of self sufficiency is the more desirable thing, the lesser degree of unity is more desirable than the greater.

Aristotle regarded the family as a natural institution, to abolish which would be detrimental to both the individual and society. The fact that the family, along with the institution of property, had stood the test of time was a proof of their usefulness. Even for the wisest, family and material possessions were cherished for their intrinsic worth and the happiness they gave. A family helped the individual to develop his very best, by inculcating civic duties and personal love, contributing

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to stability of the state. Aristotle did not elevate the public sphere above the private, nor was he keen to eliminate the private. On the contrary, the private and public were complementary, each requiring the other for diversity and stability. In this formulation, his thought was a precursor of the modern innovation of civil society which advocated a balance between the private and the public (political) sphere.

For Aristotle, property was necessary not only to fulfil the possessive instincts of owning something, but also to encourage goodness and philanthropy. Common ownership, as opposed to private property, was problematic, since individuals:

> ... do not share equally in work and recompense, those who do more work and get less recompense will be bound to raise complaints against those who get a large recompense and do little work. Indeed it is generally true that it is a difficult business for men to live together and be partners in any form of human activity, but it is specifically difficult to do so when property is involved.

Aristotle exhibited rare wisdom, rightly pointing out, that it was easier to equalize men's desires than to ensure an equal distribution of property. He raised the pertinent point of how to reward those who work harder and showed greater initiative. Some would always produce more, and therefore would expect and demand greater rewards commensurate with their efforts. The failure of communism with regard to property, work and reward in the modern period vindicated Aristotle. He was the first political philosopher to realize the need for recognizing merit, and the need to institutionalize just reward.

Aristotle contended that it would be wrong to attribute all the troubles in the world to the institution of property. In fact, most of these stemmed from the evils of human nature, which even communism could not correct. Instead, what was required was a moral change through education and training under good laws. While communism might liberate individuals from the ugly consequences of private ownership of property, it denied them the benefits that accrued from possessing something. It strived to promote a false sense of unity which undermined the very notion of a *polis* as an aggregation of different members. The other possible way of stemming the evils of private ownership was through the principle of the Golden Mean, or moderation. This ensured a middle path steering clear of wealth and poverty, opulence and squalor, and would help in the maintenance of property within limits as prescribed by nature. A reasonable amount of property, along with education, would inculcate the right attitudes of using property as instruments of public welfare. Aristotle also mentioned the virtues of benevolence and generosity that private possessions endowed, reducing selfishness and envy. He was convinced that a well-regulated institution of property would be socially beneficial. Even with regard to this argument, Aristotle's moderation found many adherents, and triumphed over the radicalism of Plato on the grounds of feasibility.

Furthermore, Aristotle pointed out that under a system of common wives, the third social class was ignored. If farmers were to be put under a common regime of wives and property, then how would their position be different from that of the guardians? On the other hand if they were allowed private property and family then it would result in the creation of two states within one, each opposing the other. Not only was the farmer denied the education that was provided for the guardians, but:

> ... it ... fails to throw any light on other questions—such as the position of the farmers in the political system, the nature of their education, and the character of the laws they are to observe. We thus find it difficult to discover—and yet this is a matter of the highest importance— how the farming class is to be constituted if the common life of the guardians is to be preserved.

Aristotle was equally critical of Plato's theory of the philosopher ruler. Permanent rule by a philosopher would lead to discontent and dissension not only among the ordinary citizens, but also among the high-spirited and the soldiers. This was dangerous, for it prevented circulation among elites and denied an opportunity to the ambitious to rule.

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Aristotle pointed out that politics was not merely about the rule of the capable. A stable polity would have to accommodate the aspirations of different claimants. In Plato's Ideal State, not only were workers prevented from assuming office, but even among the guardians not everyone was in a position to aspire for one. As opposed to rule by perfect persons, Aristotle preferred constitutional rule, for it not only checked arbitrary power, but also ensured a periodic rotation of office-bearers. Though he feared the levelling tendencies within democracies, he was more concerned about the detrimental effects, both moral and practical, of an aristocratic monopoly on social and political honours. Furthermore, he was skeptical of Plato's contention that the knowledge of the wisest ruler(s) was better than the customary law:

> There is another matter which must not be ignored—the teaching of actual experience. We are bound to pay some regard to the long past and the passage of the years, in which these things (advocated by Plato as new discoveries) would not have gone unnoticed if they had been really good. Almost everything has been discovered already, though some of the things discovered have not been co-ordinated, and some though known are not put into practice.

For Aristotle, a good ruler ought to be worldly-wise rather than wise in the world of ideas. Moreover, from his own experience he could realize clearly and strongly the difficulty in attaining truth (scientific truth), though one could pursue it indefinitely:

> He does not reject (Plato's) discovery of the nature of scientific knowledge, nor his belief that the pursuit of such knowledge is the proper task of the philosopher; but he introduces a distinction which had been unknown to Plato, between the theoretical and the practical exercise of reason. Scientific knowledge is possible only of what is necessary and universal... but they are not found in the realm of human affairs which is the field of practical activity.

Like many of Plato's later-day critics, Aristotle argued that Plato deprived his guardian class the material and psychological reasons to be happy on the grounds that the object of legislation was the happiness of the whole state.

It is impossible for the whole of a state to be happy unless most of its parts, or all, or at any rate some, are happy. The quality of being happy is not of the same order as the quality of being even. The quality of being even may exist in a whole without existing in either of its parts: the quality of being happy cannot ... . If the guardians are not happy, what are the other elements of the state which are?

If the guardians were not happy, then it was possible that they would replicate the same kind of life for others, defeating the purpose of justice as defined by Plato as making a soul happy. Aristotle was critical of denying the lower classes the right to political opinions and participation. Such a denial would make them hostile. Unlike Plato, Aristotle did not dismiss their opinions as irrelevant. Moreover, Aristotle could perceive that participation achieved consensus on political issues or "opinions", and:

> ... among the most important and exacting tasks of government in a civilized society is the distribution of various goods, such as public office and power, social recognition and prestige, wealth and privilege. The question posed by the distributive role of government is: from what elements ought a judgement about distribution be fashioned? In maintaining that community "opinions" ought to be a vital element, the central issue does not revolve around the truth or falsity of these opinions, but around the special kind of rationality demanded of a judgement that is to apply to the whole community.

Aristotle shared with Plato his dislike for democracy, but, unlike Plato, was willing to accept democracy as unavoidable. This reluctant acceptance of democracy as inevitable in Aristotle was

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shared by Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859). He conceded to the greater populace participation and did not, like Plato, make it restrictive. He accepted constitutional rule "not as a concession to human frailty but as an intrinsic part of good government and therefore a characteristic of an ideal state". A stable government for Aristotle was one which recognized the individual's right to property and human freedom. In the *Ethics*, he was respectful of the opinions and views of the old and wise, and even asserted that consensus constituted ethical truth. In the *Politics*, he placed great merit on the judgement of the many, their collective virtue and collective capacity, their entitlement to rule and respect for popular opinion.

3.2 Conception of Human Nature and State

The state, according to Aristotle, was the highest form of political union, for it represented the pinnacle of social evolution. It was necessary, for it provided a framework for the satisfaction of basic wants and also ensured a means to secure and realize good life in a uniquely human sense. An individual found fulfilment from the advantages made possible by a state through its common endeavours, and one who did not feel its need was either an "angel" or a "beast". The state was prior to the individual, in the sense that it provided opportunities for the achievement of full humanity. Social affiliation gave to individuals their species identity:

> All associations are in the nature of parts of the political association. Men journey together with a view to some particular advantage, and by way of providing some particular thing needed for the purposes of life; and similarly the political association seems to have come together originally and to continue in existence, for the sake of the general advantage which it brings.

The state was an instrument for an individual's self-perfection. Far from being artificially or contractually created, it evolved naturally. Aristotle contended that man by nature was a political animal, making the state necessary and desirable. The significant point to note is that Aristotle's reference to nature confirmed the debate between *nomos* (convention) and *phusis* (nature) that dominated Greek political theory in the fifth century BC. As advocates of the *phusis* argument, both Plato and Aristotle asserted that the state and its laws were more than a product of convention. It was a natural institution reflecting individuals' needs and purposes, given human gregariousness and sociability.

Like Plato, Aristotle asserted that education was an effective way to produce political unity, though he criticized his mentor for not recognizing its economic significance. If the farmer and the guardian were to receive the same education, then how could one expect them to perform different functions? Conversely, if they did not receive similar education, then it would be a mistake to assume that education could unify the city. For Aristotle, education was more than merely acquiring skills and common beliefs, a point reitctated by Smith in his plea for the division of labour, and the specialization of skills. Education, to Aristotle, symbolized a way of life, for individuals learned largely by doing. Its goal was not unity, but to foster and protect a way of life that encouraged and sustained diverse social and political activities.

Aristotle was convinced of the individual's innate sociability and the natural desire to congregate and remain in society, by virtue of the fact that a human being enjoyed a unique capacity for moral choice and reasoned speech. Not only did reason distinguish humans from other social species, but they alone had a perception of good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust, implying that these faculties could be developed only in company with others, and not in isolation. Not only was social cooperation necessary, but also desirable.

For Aristotle, the good of a community was clearly the greater, the perfect thing to attain and preserve, than the good of a single individual. This did not mean that an individual could be made to sacrifice the private for the public. Rather, being poor judges of their own interests, individuals

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could be educated in virtue to achieve their own happiness and excellence, in congruence with common good. Once this was attained, citizens could be habituated through laws and political life to follow the virtuous path, resulting in a well-ordered public arena. The individual's social nature and the implied "political" content resulted in virtuous public behaviour necessary for the pursuit of private happiness. For Aristotle, private life was a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition for enjoying a full human existence.

Aristotle pointed out that individuals could cultivate reasoned speech and moral choice with a view to achieving their full potential. The absence of these qualities would mean that human beings were worse off than animals.

According to Aristotle, animals are social or individualistic; individualistic animals like the big cats live together, but that is confined only to their pride consisting of the male, the female and their cubs. Social animals, though not applicable to all gregarious ones, have a single common activity that unites them and that is the reason why human beings orbit towards the state. Rights of citizenship enable the use of one's unique human faculties through participation in the common life of the community. The desire for human company, a basic and universal human need, is so deeply entrenched that even saints and monks who otherwise renounce normal society and human relationships, form their own communities:

> What effectively distinguishes the citizen from all others is his participation in Judgement and Authority, that is, holding office, legal, political, administrative .... There are different kinds of citizens, but... a citizen in the fullest sense is one who has a share in the privileges of rule ... a share both in ruling and in being ruled with a view to a life that is in accordance with goodness.

Did u know? Aristotle characterized human beings as essentially social, he had in mind those animals which live and work together as a community, like ants, bees, cranes, elephants and wasps.

In the opening passages of Book III, Aristotle examined three topics: the nature of a state; citizenship; and the virtues of a good person and a good citizen. The state was an association of persons for the sake of securing the best moral life. The quality of life within a state would depend on those who constitute it and the end they wished to pursue. Accordingly, the end of the state depended on who could be its members, and how they wished to lead a life that was individually satisfying. In order to answer these questions satisfactorily, Aristotle defined a constitution not just as a form of government or a set of norms, but as a way of life, for *that* determined the moral character of a state. A state existed as long as its form of government endured, and any change in its constitution signified a change in its way of life too. Only within an Ideal State was a good person and a good citizen identical. In Aristotle's thought, "law, constitution, state, form of government all tend to coalesce, since from a moral point of view they are all equally relative to the purpose which causes the association to exist".

Arendt looked upon Plato and Aristotle as espousing a distinct sense of public life within the *polis*. Political activity for them assumed importance only after the satisfaction of human needs, both procreative and economic. Division of labour arose not so much out of need as from a desire to live well. It was for this reason that they regarded the *polis* as the highest and the most comprehensive form of human association. It aimed at the highest good, for the driving force behind every community was a notion of good. It represented a partnership based on justice and friendship or general solidarity. It is interesting that similar sentiments on the state were expressed by Burke. The *polis* was natural, and hence prior to the individual, not in the chronological, but in the

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teleological sense. It represented the whole with the individuals as its parts, for the individuals were not self-sufficient. The state tamed the savagery in human beings and made them just:

> Man is thus intended by nature to be part of a political whole, and there is therefore an immanent impulse in all men towards an association of this order ... . Man, when perfected, is the best of animals; but if he be isolated from law and justice he is the worst of all. Injustice is all the graver when it is armed injustice; and man is furnished from birth with arms (such as, for instance, language) which are intended to serve the purpose of moral prudence and virtue, but which may be used in preference for opposite ends. That is why, if he be without virtue, he is an almost unholy savage being, and worse than all others is the indulgence of lust and gluttony. Justice (which is his salvation) belongs to the *polis*; for justice, which is the determination of what is just, is an ordering of the political association.

Aristotle pointed out that the state evolved from lower associations. The first association was a household or the family, which arose to satisfy an individual's biological urges and everyday wants. A cluster of households became a village, and a group of villages constituted a political community or the *polis*. Each of these—household, village and the state—indicated different levels of self-sufficiency or autarchy.

> ... the final and perfect association, formed from a number of villages ... (is) the *polis*—an association which may be said to have reached the height of full self-sufficiency, or rather we may say that while it *grows* for the sake of mere life (insofar, and at that stage, still short of full self-sufficiency), it exists (when once it is fully grown) for the sake of a good life (and is therefore fully self-sufficient).

The nature of an association was in its end, namely self-sufficiency, which meant not only the satisfaction of economic needs, but also the realization of the full human potential. This was possible only within the *polis*. The *polis* was the most sovereign and inclusive association offering a framework for a full and true life.

> ... the *polis* belongs to the class of things that exist by nature, and that man is by nature an animal intended to live in a *polis*. He who is without a *polis*, by reason of his own nature and not of some accident is either a poor sort of being, or a being higher than man: he is like the man of whom Homer wrote in a denunciation: clanless and lawless and heartless is he.

Both Plato and Aristotle regarded the *polis* as a complete form of reality. They zealously stressed its self-sufficiency and self-governing characteristics, projecting it as their political ideal too. Aristotle specifically stated that a *polis* should be large enough to guarantee self-sufficiency, and small enough to ensure good government. He defined a state as "a union of families and villages in a perfect and self sufficing life by which we mean a happy and a honourable life".

3.3 Nature of Happiness

Having stated that good was the purpose of every community, Aristotle identified good as happiness. In the *Ethics* and the *Politics*, he was "concerned with the practical science of human happiness ... . The *Ethics* shows us what form and style of life are necessary for happiness; the *Politics* what particular form of constitution, what set of institutions are necessary to make this form of life possible and to safeguard it". The pursuit of happiness was clearly a human function, and referred to a soul's activity. Like Socrates and Plato, Aristotle was concerned about tending one's soul with a view to attaining happiness.

Happiness represented activity, the quest for excellence. In order to do things and do them well, to prosper and to flourish, certain skills were needed. Excellence led to success. Whether in pursuit of moral virtue or in the exercise of reason, happiness was in a life of activity or activities that were

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undertaken for their own sake. Happiness, for Aristotle, was not a state of mind or feeling, but referred to the quality of life in the organized and active expression of one's powers and capacities. In other words, it was defined in terms of a function in accordance with a person's virtue or excellence. Happiness was identified with Good, identified as the object of human endeavour. Good varied according to different categories: in quality, it referred to justice; in quantity, to moderation; and in time, to opportunity. He therefore rejected the notion of unified Good in its transcendental sense.

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle regarded a life of sufficiency and self-reliance as being a happy one. A pleasant life would be one with abundant possessions, security of property, good family and social status. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he clarified it as ethical virtue and pursuit of reason. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, he contended that to live meant to know, to think collectively, implying that individual and social consciousness were intertwined.

For Aristotle, rational and irrational were two qualities of a soul. The irrational aspect was further subdivided into vegetative and appetitive. The vegetative part was common to plants, animals and humans, for it contributed to the growth of the organism by controlling nutrition, excretion and other bodily functions. It related to the unconscious aspect, for it functioned best when the body was asleep. The appetitive aspect was the emotional side of a human person.

The rational aspect, on the contrary, was limited to the human person only. It referred to the deliberate and conscious aspects, and could be developed to its full potential through discipline and purposeful direction. It was natural for an individual to contemplate and act rationally, for that led to happiness. Aristotle then concerned himself with the means and conditions under which an individual could be happy. Happiness was attained by the exercise of two types of virtues, the ethical and the intellectual.

Intellectual virtue was the knowledge of final causes, and that included "practical wisdom" (*phronesis*) or a virtuous ethical behaviour, and "wisdom" (*sophia*) or the knowledge of eternal and unchanging objects. Aristotle personally favoured a life devoted to contemplation, viewing it as the best and highest form of human activity, and stating in the *Ethics* the reasons for his preference. Reason (*nous*) was the best guide, and contemplation meant a continuous and a pleasant activity which could be exercised for its own sake. It was a divine activity. But Aristotle realized that a life devoted to pure contemplation was ennobling for the individual who was partly and not wholly divine. Only a philosopher could realize a life of contemplation, for he alone was the one who needed the least of external goods. However, a philosopher should live among people and act in a manner that exemplified ethical virtues.

Ethical virtues involved bravery in battle (courage), honesty in business dealings (justice) and generosity towards one's city and friends, magnificence and liberality. An ethically virtuous individual had self-esteem, enabling one to assess one's worth to the community (magnanimity, proper ambition) in a proper perspective. It implied that such a person would be temperamentally balanced, reliable, amiable and moderate. It was possible to acquire these qualities within the *polis* through active participation in its institutions. Moral virtue, according to Aristotle, could not be taught, for it was a product of right actions instilled through habit, training and discipline. The emphasis was to acquire excellence by *doing* rather than *knowing* the right thing. In the context of defining ethical virtues, Aristotle formulated his notion of the "Golden Mean" or "Nothing in excess", which in simple words meant moderation. It is interesting to note that the idea of moderation was so deeply entrenched in the Greek psyche, that by the end of the classical era it had become one of the grand dicta of the Hellenic world.

In the *Ethics*, Aristotle explained in great detail the working logic of the mean. For instance, courage was a mean between cowardice and recklessness. Similarly, temperance was a mean between abstinence and self-indulgence, generosity between meanness and extravaganza, modesty

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between bashfulness and shamelessness, ready wit between buffoonery and boorishness, liberality between prodigality and meanness, and proper pride between vanity and humility. Some virtues, like truthfulness, did not fit into this scheme. Too much or too little exercise impaired bodily functions. Likewise, too much or too little food or drink destroyed health. The middle path, or the via media, was the one to be established as the general rule of right conduct and moral virtue. Aristotle then listed the virtues that characterized a gentle person—courage, self-control, generosity, magnificence, great- or high-mindedness, a nameless virtue between ambition and its lack, gentleness, friendliness, truthfulness, wittiness and shame. These virtues constituted the golden mean.

Aristotle applied the principle of the golden mean to his analysis of the political and social structures of the state, as evident from his extensive analysis of the "mixed constitutions" in the *Politics*. He attributed the decline, or even the demise of a state, to disproportion. Structurally, this problem was manifest in "pure" constitutions, for it excluded some classes and interests by disenfranchisement, leading to factionalism, so rampant in Greece. Aristotle's solution was to balance the forces of exclusiveness with those of equality, quality with those of quantity, democratic with oligarchic tendencies.

In addition to an ethically virtuous nature, a happy man required "external goods" like health, wealth and friends. These were instruments for the exercise of one's virtues. For instance, friendliness could not be demonstrated unless one had friends. Friendship was the noblest of all these external goods. It was more important than justice, for between friends justice was not needed. Moreover, when individuals are just, friendship would still be beneficial. Perfect and fine friendship was possible only among few, who were equal in status and stable in character. It required time and effort to cultivate good friendships, in the same way as one could not be generous unless one had wealth. For Aristotle, certain things, like birth in a good family, well-behaved children, beauty and intelligence, add to happiness. Conversely, their lack dampened happiness. While happiness implied contemplation plus virtue, it also meant external goods. He was equally assertive that the pursuit of human excellence could not be in isolation, for humans were social animals. Happiness increased when shared.

Aristotle placed great premium on education, as it trained emotions and impulses in persons, and worked for good as defined by the legislator or the ruler. The task of education was to inculcate moral, social and civic qualities in an individual, develop habits of good citizenship, and in a good *polis*, good persons. Humans had to be taught to do the right thing. "The final aim of education in goodness is to make our immediate judgement as to what is right to coincide with the spirit of wise legislation".

Aristotle described the ideal man as one who:

> ... does not expose himself needlessly to danger, since there are few things for which he cares sufficiently; but he is willing in great crises, to give even his life, knowing that under certain conditions it is not worthwhile to live ... to confer kindness is a mark of superiority. He does not take part in public displays... . He is open in his dislikes and preferences, he talks and acts frankly ... . He is never fired with admiration .... He cannot live in complaisance with others, except it be a friend ... he is not fond of talking .... It is no concern of his that he should be praised, or that others should be blamed. He does not speak evil of others, even of his enemies, unless it be to themselves. His carriage is sedate, his voice deep, his speech measured, he is not given to hurry, for he is concerned about only a few things; he is not prone to vehemence, for he thinks nothing is very important. He bears the accidents of life with dignity and grace, making the best of his circumstances like a skillful general who marshals his limited forces -with all the strategy of war. He is his own best friend and takes delight in privacy, whereas a man of no virtue or ability is his own worst enemy and is afraid of solitude.

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The aim of the state for Aristotle was:

> ... to produce cultured gentlemen—men who combine the aristocratic mentality with the love of learning and arts. This combination existed in the highest perfection in the Athens of Pericles, not in the population at large but among the well-to-do. It began to break down in the last years of Pericles.

3.4 Organic Theory of State

The basic idea of the organic theory is to show that the state is, in its nature, like a biological organism or a living being and that the relation between the state and the individual is the same as between an organism and its cell. The organismic theory is essentially a biological concept which describes the phenomena of the state in biological terms. According to this theory, the state is not a mere aggregation of individuals, but an organism having parts and organs which arc related to one another in the same way as the different organs of an animal or a plant are related to one another. The theory is as old as political thought itself. Plato compared state to 'A' and man to 'a': it is an individual magnified. He compared the rulers, warriors and working classes to wisdom, courage, and appetite of the individual respectively. Aristotle drew a comparison between the symmetry of the state and symmetry of the body and believed that the individual is an intrinsic part of the society. Cicero, a Roman philosopher, also makes a passing reference to this theory. He likened the head of the state to the spirit that rules the body. Hobbes compared the state to a huge, imaginary monster called the Laviathan, which is but an artificial man, of great strength and stature. According to him the state could suffer from human ailments like pleurisy, scabies and boils etc. Rousseau, a French philosopher, too, compared the "body politic" to the "Human body", both of which he said possessed the "motive power" of "force" and "will" (the legislative power and the executive power). The former was the "heart" of the state; the latter its "brain". Blunschli, a German philosopher, found a striking resemblance between the state and an organism. According to him the state is not a lifeless mechanism. It has life and spirit. It is not merely a collection of individuals just as an oil painting is not merely a collection of drops of oil-paint. The state has its own personality independency as that of the individual comprising the state. Idealists described the state as a moral organism but according to Spencer the state is a living organism. He draws an elaborate analogy between the state and a living organism in the following manner:

1. Both state and an organism show a similar process of growth and evolution from simplicity to complexity. State in the beginning was just a tribal organization but it has developed from that primitive stage to the modern complex structure with a multiplicity of functions. An organism also exhibits similar process of growth. An embryo in the body of the mother is just a lump of flesh but slowly grows to a complete whole with various organs having variety of functions. Both grow from inside outwards. Each evolves by adjustment and response to environments. In process of growth each undergoes individualization, specialization and differentiation of both organs and functions.
2. Both state and organism have three main systems ; a sustaining system; a distributory system; a regulating system. Sustaining system of an organism consists of digestive system by which food is digested and life of an organism, is sustained. In the case of the state there is a corresponding sustaining system which consists of agriculture and industries by virtue of which the State is sustained. The distributing system in an organism consist of circulatory system by which blood is distributed to various parts of the body. In the case of the state, the distributing system consists of transport and communication. The regulating system of an organism consists of brain and nerves. Governmental and Military system constitute the regulating system in the State. There is thus a parallelism between the ways in which animal and social life are preserved.

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3. As an organism is composed of cells, so the state is composed of individuals. In both cases, the component units contribute to the life of the whole.
4. An organism is constantly subjected to the process of constant wear and tear. Old and worn out cells die out and their place is taken by the fresh cells formed by the blood. In the case of social organism as well old and decrepit individuals die out and their place is taken by the newborns.
5. Health of an organism depends upon the health of the cells organs. In case they get diseased, the whole organism suffers. In the similar way, health of the state depends upon the moral and physical health of the individuals, and associations of individuals. In case they do not work properly the efficiency and performance of the state is bound to suffer. There is thus a complete interdependence of the parts and the whole in both cases.
6. Both organism and state exhibit a "similar cycle of birth, growth, decay and death. From these points of agreement, the conclusion is drawn that state is an organism and there is a lot of identity between the two. The state lives, grows and develops much as an individual does.

The theory inevitably leads to the assumption that the individuals comprising the state are completely subordinated to the state just as the cells of the body depend for their life and existence on the organism. Chop off a part of the skin, it ceases to exist.

This theory leads us, therefore, to the conclusion that an individual cannot exist outside the state. The theory thus hits at individual freedom and inevitably leads to the idea of the establishment of totalitarian state or fascism.

Self-Assessment

Choose the correct option:

1. Aristotle was born at ..... in Northern Greece.
   (*i*) Macedon (*ii*) Athens (*iii*) Stagira (*iv*) None of these
2. Nicomachus was a court physician to king ..... .
   (*i*) Amyntas III (*ii*) Alexander (*iii*) Xenocrates (*iv*) None of these
3. Aristotle joined Plato's academy at the age of 17 years in ..... .
   (*i*) 365 BC (*ii*) 366 BC (*iii*) 367 BC (*iv*) None of these
4. Aristotle spent the last year of his life at Chalcis in ..... .
   (*i*) Greece (*ii*) Macedonia (*iii*) Euboea (*iv*) None of these.

3.5 Summary

- Aristotle has rightly been called a political scientist, for he defined the subject matter of politics and identified its core elements, namely sovereignty of law, constitutionalism, faith in moderation, conception of proportionate equality and just rewards, causes and remedies of revolution and polity or the middle class state as the best practicable and stable political system.
- All these topics were scrutinized and analyzed in the Politics. Rather than being a book, it was a compilation of independent essays and lecture notes. In dealing with these themes:
- Aristotle not only laid the general principles of universal significance but also reflected the prevailing Greek notion which is why it is both interesting and important—interesting in showing the common prejudices of educated Greeks in his time and important as a source of many principles which remained influential until the end of the Middle Ages.
- Aristotle's treatment of the various themes in the Politics reflected his empirical and inductive method. With the help of collected observation, common opinion and traditional notions,

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data was gathered and theory emerged from an analysis of alternative perceptions. While in Plato's metaphysics, the real world, and human understanding and perceptions were devalued, Aristotle dissected reality empirically in the same fashion as a physician diagnosed illness and health.

- Aristotle believed that observation was crucial to the study of political phenomena, and the way changes occurred within it helped us to understand its real nature. Change was teleological, meaning movement towards the natural predetermined end. A scientist would look for material, study the structure and its functions, and ask the following questions: Out of what? What was it? From where and for what sake? In other words, these were the material, formal, efficient and final causes respectively. While in a conscious action, the final causes might lie in a purpose beyond the object analyzed in the natural process it was the emerging form that guided development. Aristotle perceived order as being more important than disorder, in view of his acceptance of the idea of an in-dwelling nature. He rejected the argument that change was primary and that all equilibrium analysis was partial and untrue, for there were real structures in things, the world was a plurality of homeostatic systems whose basic plan could be discovered and rationally formulated through an analysis of its structure and functions. As in the case of the world, order was eternal. It was neither imposed from outside, nor did it evolve. Plato understood change as one that had degenerated from his ideal.

3.6 Key-Words

1. Praxis : Action
2. Polis : City-state
3. Koinônia : Community
4. Agathos : Good

3.7 Review Questions

1. Discuss life sketch of Aristotle.
2. What is the conception of human nature of Aristotle?
3. Explain Aristotle's organic theory of state.
4. Write a note on Aristotle's nature of happiness?

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*iii*) 2. (*i*) 3. (*iii*) 4. (*iii*)

3.8 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Unit 4: Aristotle's Theory of Revolution

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Understand Aristotle's philosophy
- Explain Classification of States
- Discuss Theory of Revolution

Introduction

Aristotle is generally regarded as one of the most influential ancient thinkers in a number of philosophical fields, including political theory. Although the surviving works of Aristotle probably represent only a fragment of the whole, they include his investigations of an amazing range of subjects, from logic, philosophy, and ethics to physics, biology, psychology, politics, and rhetoric. Aristotle appears to have thought through his views as he wrote, returning to significant issues at different stages of his own development. The result is less a consistent system of thought than a complex record of Aristotle's thinking about many significant issues.

The aim of Aristotle's logical treatises (known collectively as the Organon was to develop a universal method of reasoning by means of which it would be possible to learn everything there is to know about reality. Thus, the Categories proposes a scheme for the description of particular things in terms of their properties, states, and activities. On interpretation, Prior Analytics, and Posterior Analytics examine the nature of deductive inference, outlining the system of syllogistic reasoning from true propositions that later came to be the logical works, the Physics contributes to the universal method by distinguishing among the four causes which may be used to explain everything, with special concern for why things are the way they are and the apparent role of chance in the operation of the world. In other treatises, Aristotle applied this method, with its characteristics emphasis on teleological explanation, to astronomical and biological explorations of the natural world.

In Metaphysics Aristotle tried to justify the entire enterprise by grounding it all in an abstract study of being qua being. Although Aristotle rejected the Platonic theory of forms, he defended his own vision of ultimate reality, including the eternal existence of substance. On the Soul uses the notion of a hylomorphic composite to provide a detailed account of the functions exhibited by living things–vegetable, animal, and human–and explains the use of sensation and reason to

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achieve genuine knowledge. That Aristotle was interested in more than a strictly scientific exploration of human nature is evident from the discussion of literary art (particularly tragedy) in Poetics and the methods of persuasion in the Rhetoric.

Aristotle made several efforts to explain how moral conduct contributes to the good life for human agents, including the Eudemian Ethics and the Magna Moralia, but the most complete surviving statement of his views on morality occurs in the Nicomachean Ethics. There he considered the natural desire to achieve happiness, described the operation of human volition and moral deliberation, developed a theory of each virtue as the mean between vicious extremes, discussed the value of three kinds of friendship, and defended his conception of an ideal life of intellectual pursuit.

But on Aristotle's view, the lives of individual human beings are invariably linked together in a social context. In the Politics he speculated about the origins of the state, described and assessed the relative merits of various types of government, and listed the obligations of the individual citizen. He may also have been the author of a model Constitution of Athens, in which the abstract notion of constitutional government is applied to the concrete life of a particular society.

Aristotle's life seems to have influenced his political thought in various ways: his interest in biology seems to be expressed in the naturalism of his politics; his interest in comparative politics and his sympathies for democracy as well as monarchy may have been encouraged by his travels and experience of diverse political system; he criticizes harshly, while borrowing extensively, from Plato's Republic, Statesman, and Laws; and his own politics is intended to guide rulers and statemen, reflecting the high political circles in which he moved.

4.1 Aristotle's Philosophy

Aristotle defines philosophy in terms of essence, saying that philosophy is "the science of the universal essence of that which is actual". Plato had defined it as the "science of the idea", meaning by idea what we should call the unconditional basis of phenomena. Both pupil and master regard philosophy as concerned with the universal; Aristotle, however, finds the universal in particular things, and called it the essence of things, while Plato finds that the universal exists apart from particular things, and is related to them as their prototype or exemplar. For Aristotle, therefore, philosophic method implies the ascent from the study of particular phenomena to the knowledge of essence, while for Plato philosophic method means the descent from a knowledge of universal ideas to a contemplation of particular imitations of those ideas. In a certain sense, Aristotle's method is both inductive and deductive, while Plato's is essentially deductive.

Like his teacher Plato, Aristotle's philosophy aims at the universal. Aristotle, however, found the universal in particular things, which he called the essence of things, while Plato finds that the universal exists apart from particular things, and is related to them as their prototype or exemplar. For Aristotle, therefore, philosophic method implies the ascent from the study of particular phenomena to the knowledge of essences, while for Plato philosophic method means the descent from a knowledge of universal Forms (or ideas) to a contemplation of particular imitations of these. For Aristotle, "form" still refers to the unconditional basis of phenomena but is "instantiated" in a particular substance (see Universals and particulars, below). In a certain sense, Aristotle's method is both inductive and deductive, whole Plato's is essentially deductive from a priori principles.

In modern times, the scope of philosophy has become limited to more generic or abstract inquiries, such as ethics and metaphysics, in which togic plays a major role. Today's philosophy tends to exclude empirical study of the natural world by means of the scientific method. In contrast, Aristotle's philosophical endeavors encompassed virtually all facets of intellectual enquiry.

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Notes In Aristotle's terminology, "natural philosophy" is a branch of philosophy examining the phenomena of the natural world, and includes fields that would be regarded today as physics, biology and other natural sciences.

In the larger sense of the word, Aristotle makes philosophy coextensive with reasoning, which he also would describe as "science". Note, however, that his use of the term science carries a different meaning than that covered by the term "scientific method". For Aristotle, "all science (dianoia) is either practical, poetical or theoretical". By practical science, he means ethics and politics; by poetical science, he means the study of poetry and the other fine arts; by theoretical science, he means physics, mathematics and metaphysics.

If logic (or "analytics") is regarded as a study preliminary to philosophy, the divisions of Aristotelian philosophy would consist of: (*i*) Logic; (*ii*) Theoretical Philosophy, including Metaphysics, Physics, Mathematics, (*iii*) Practical Philosophy and (*iv*) Poetical Philosophy.

In the period between his two stays in Athens, between his times at the Academy and the Lyceum, Aristotle conducted most of the scientific thinking and research for which he is renowned today. In fact, most of Aristotle's life was devoted to the study of the objects of natural science. Aristotle's metaphysics contains observations on the nature of numbers but he made no original contributions to mathematics. He did, however, perform original research in the natural sciences, *e.g.*, botany, zoology, physics, astronomy, chemistry, meteorology, and several other sciences.

Aristotle's writings on science are largely qualitative, as opposed to quantitative. Beginning in the 16th century, scientists began applying mathematics to the physical sciences, and Aristotle's work in this area was deemed hopelessly inadequate. His failings were largely due to the absence of concepts like mass, velocity, force and temperature. He had a conception of speed and temperature, but no quantitative understanding of them, which was partly due to the absence of basic experimental devices, like clocks and thermometers.

His writings provide an account of many scientific observations, a mixture of precocious accuracy and curious errors. For example, in his History of Animals he claimed that human males have more teeth than females. In a similar vein, John Philoponus, and later Galileo, showed by simple experiments that Aristotle's theory that a heavier object falls faster than a lighter object is incorrect. On the other hand, Aristotle refuted Democritus's claim that the Milky Way was made up of "those stars which are shaded by the earth from the sun's rays," pointing out (correctly, even if such reasoning was bound to be dismissed for a long time) that, given "current astronomical demonstrations" that "the size of the sun is greater than that of the earth and the distance of the stars from the earth many times greater than that of the sun, then...the sun shines on all the stars and the earth screens none of them."

In places, Aristotle goes too far in deriving 'laws of the universe' from simple observation and over-stretched reason. Today's scientific method assumes that such thinking without sufficient facts in ineffective, and that discerning the validity of one's hypothesis requires far more rigorous experimentation than that which Aristotle used to support his laws.

Aristotle also had some scientific blind spots. He posited a geocentric cosmology that we may discern in selections of the Metaphysics, which was widely accepted up untill the 16th century. From the 3rd century to the 16th century, the dominant view held that the Earth was the centre of the universe (geocentrism).

Since he was perhaps the philosopher most respected by European thinkers during and after the Renaissance, these thinkers often took Aristotle's erroneous positions as given, which held back

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science in this epoch. However, Aristotle's scientific shortcomings should not mislead one into forgetting his great advances in the many scientific fields. For instance, he founded logic as a formal science and created foundations to biology that were not superseded for two millennia. Moreover, he introduced the fundamental notion that nature is composed of things that change and that studying such changes can provide useful knowledgeof underlying constants.

4.2 Household (Slaves, Women and Property)

The household was important in Aristotle's political philosophy, for it fulfilled the basic and important functions of an individual, namely the instinct of self-preservation and procreative functions, and for the satisfaction of economic needs. It trained the young ones to be good citizens by inculcating civic and moral virtues. Hence "of the two lesser communities, the household and the village, which are parts of the *polls* and precede it in time, the household is much more important in Aristotle's ethical and political theory".

Aristotle, like Plato, realized that private interests of the members of a household might clash with those of the *polis* as a whole. It was for this reason that he attached considerable importance to the training of the inmates of the household and to the organization of the household:

> Every household is a part of a *polis*. The society of husband and wife, and that of parents and children, are parts of the household. The goodness of every part must be considered with reference to the goodness of the whole. We must therefore consider the government (of the whole *polis*) before we proceed to deal with the training of children and women—at any rate if we hold that the goodness of children and women makes any difference to the goodness of the *polis*. And it must make a difference. Women are half of the free population: children grow up to be partners in the government of the state.

The key figure was the head of the household, the father, who acted as a link between the political community and his household. Being a citizen and a full member of the *polis*, he was also the master of his house, his family and property. He exercised control over the household in three ways: as a husband over his wife, as a parent over his children, and as a master over his slaves. The fourth component of a household was "acquisition". Each of the other three relationships, involving the head, required a different kind of ruling.

Slavery

Aristotle discussed at length the relationship between the master and the slave. He tried to explain the relevance and use of slavery, an institution that was universal. Greece was no exception. Unlike Plato, who ignored the institution, Aristotle defended slavery both from the point of view of the slave and the master, the householder. Many feel that Aristotle endorsed and systematized Plato's views on slavery. Plato protested against the enslavement of Greeks by Greeks in the fifth book of the *Republic*. In the *Laws*, he recognized the need for legislation for slaves. He clubbed them with children, for having imperfectly developed minds. Personally, Aristotle recommended less harshness towards slaves. He also rejected the enslavement of the Greeks, but thought it proper for barbarians who were by "nature" slaves.

> Greeks regard themselves as noble not only in their own country, but absolutely and in all places; but they regard barbarians as noble only in their own country—thus assuming that there is one sort of nobility and freedom which is absolute and another which is only relative... just as man is bom of man and animal of animal, so a good man is born of good men.

Aristotle distinguished between animate and inanimate instruments in a household. The slave was an animate instrument intended for action and not for production; unlike artisans, a slave did

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not create a product, but only helped in the business of living within the household. Since, as an instrument, he served his master, he had no interests other than those of the master. The slave not only was a slave of his master, but also belonged entirely to him in the same way as a possession was spoken of not only as a part of something else, but also as belonging wholly to it. The master, on the contrary, was a master to the slave, and did not belong to him. He distinguished between conventional and natural slaves. The former were not slaves by nature. They had reason and were qualified to be citizens in their own state. However, they became slaves if taken as prisoners of war, a common practice during Aristotle's time. Natural slaves lacked reason, hence had to be under the permanent subordination of the master.

Aristotle believed that some persons were by nature free and others slaves. A natural slave's chief use was of his body. Though he possessed enough mind to control himself, he could understand and profit by the control of a superior mind. A family slave, by serving the interests of "his" family, got elevated. Since he served a moral purpose, he enjoyed benefits which were moral:

> ... anybody who by his nature is not his own man, but another's, is by his nature a slave; secondly, that anybody who, being a man, is an article of property, is another man's; and thirdly, that an article of property is an instrument intended for the purpose of action and separable from its possessor.

Aristotle justified slavery from the point of view of the householder and the slave. A householder gained for he was relieved of menial chores, giving him the leisure time for moral and intellectual pursuits that would enable him to contribute to the affairs of the state and fulfil his duties as a citizen. A slave imbibed moral and intellectual excellence from his master, which if left to himself would have been difficult. Aristotle justified slavery on the grounds of triumph of reason and virtue, the master representing reason and virtue, and the slave absence of reason, and non-virtue or less virtue. For a slave, the choice was between inferior and no virtue, differing from his master for whom it was a choice between inferior and perfect virtue. Thus, slavery was seen as being mutually beneficial and just. Moreover, it was in conformity with the principle of ruling and subordination that one saw in nature at large. Aristotle was categorical that the subordination of the slave must be towards endowing the slave with virtue and not to augment wealth, otherwise a slave would lose the one advantage that slavery brought forth, namely the guidance of his life by one of superior virtue.

Aristotle believed that men differed from one another in their abilities and mental faculties, and justified slavery for those lacking in these qualities. A slave could not govern himself, for he lacked the reason to do so. Aristotle was against making the defeated foe a slave. Prisoners of war could be made slaves only if success in war indicated superior intelligence of the victors. He also rejected the idea of making a person a slave to one who was merely superior in power and not in excellence. If the causes of a war were basically just, then prisoners of war could be made slaves.

The theory of slavery was based on two assumptions: first, men were divided in respect of their capacities for virtue; and second, that it was possible to determine the category to which an individual belonged. He recommended humane treatment for slaves, and conceded to them freedom if they so desired. Ross defended Aristotle's attitude towards slavery by arguing that "while to us he seems reactionary, he may have seemed revolutionary to them". Popper rejected this observation:

> Aristotle's views were indeed reactionary as can be best seen from the fact that he repeatedly finds it necessary to defend them against the doctrine that no man is a slave by nature, and further from his own testimony to the anti-slavery tendencies of the Athenian democracy.

Furthermore, Aristotle pointed out that a master-slave relationship differed from the one between a political ruler and the subjects. A slave, unlike a subject, was a tool of the master. Here, Aristotle

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invoked a distinction between a natural and unnatural slave. A natural slave had reason only to the point of recognizing a command and obeying it, for he lacked the capacity to direct himself. "The master must simply know how to command what the slave must know how to do". He did not say what would be done with conventional slaves. Interestingly, he expressed in his will that his own slaves would be freed and not sold. In the *Ethics*, he suggested that a slave could become his master's friend. In Book VII of the *Politics*, he recommended their emancipation as a reward for good service. He also realized that the institution of slavery was not permanent. It would go with advancement in technology:

> If every instrument would accomplish its own work, obeying or antici-pating the will of others ... if the shuttle would weave, or the plectrum touch the lyre, without a hand to guide them, the chief workmen would not need assistants, nor masters slaves.

Women and Family

Aristotle provided a common-sense defence of the family. He did not abolish private households, for the family was a source of pleasure for both men and women, since it created and established a bond that united members, allowing them the space for the exercise and development of their individual talents. Writing on the family, the relationship between the husband and wife, parents and children he observed:

> "There seems to be a friendship between man and woman by nature. For the human being by nature is more disposed to live in pairs than in *polis*, in asmuch as the household is prior in time and more necessary than the *polis*, and the creation of children is more common with other animals. Among other animals, the community extends only this far (to the creation of children), [not only] for the sake of reproduction, but also for various aspects of their lives. Immediately, the work is divided, and there is one task for men and another for women. So they assist one another, putting their individual talents into the common good. On account of these things, there seems to be both usefulness and pleasure in this sort of friendship. This friendship also exists in accordance with virtue, if they are both good. For there is a virtue of each, and they are pleased by this .... It seems that children are a bond, wherefore marriages without children dissolve more quickly. For children are a common good for both and what is common holds them together.

Aristotle was critical of the Socratic-Platonic conception of communism, on the premise that to abolish the family would mean its destruction as a school of moral and civic virtues for the young. The family fostered love and friendship, and established a bond between its members in an orderly way. Its natural hierarchy ensured stability, and offered the preconditions for the pursuit of virtue. His defence of the family was similar to the arguments developed by Hegel. He was appreciative of the attention that Socrates and Plato gave to women's education, but he was critical of their proposal for sexual equality as it ignored the diversity that existed in the private sphere. For Aristotle, the private sphere was the foundation on which the public was organized. To ignore this link would result in an unstable and unnatural enterprise.

Aristotle was equally critical of the Spartan model, which granted unrestricted freedom to its women, resulting in divisiveness and disunity. By emphasizing virile power, men were made martial and ascetic, while women were left uncontrolled by both traditions and the laws of the state making them self-indulgent and luxurious. As a result, women could not be trained in the art of courage, nor did they learn to submit to authority, thus leaving them to pursue their private interests rather than common good. He concluded that to ignore women was to overlook one-half of the happiness of a society, making the latter unstable and vulnerable.

Aristotle was emphatic that women should be made a part of the city and its educational process, but could be left out of the political process.

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For Aristotle, women and the family belonged to the private realm, which was really the world of the particular rather than the universal. The male being superior, stronger and better, ruled over the female—a defective, incomplete male. He described a "woman as an infertile male", "a male is male in virtue of a particular ability and a female in virtue of a particular inability". The male was the active partner and the female passive, required primarily for sexual reproduction. Had it not been for this, remarked Aristotle, this particular deformity in nature would not have existed. In marriage, the husband by his superior virtue was the more useful, and hence the dominant partner. Though the husband-wife was interdependent, they were not equal.

Did u know? Like Plato, he regarded the world as hierarchically structured, where the better ruled over the inferior, the strong over the weak, and the soul over the body.

A well-ordered family was one that took into account differences between its individual members, and ensured that each worked in a manner so as to contribute to the common good. Accepting this differentiation made it easy to distribute tasks and authority that were naturally ordained and readily accepted.

A husband-wife relationship differed from the one between a governor and the governed, which kept changing. In a political community, the position of the ruler and the ruled interchanged depending on circumstances and the dictates of justice. But in a husband-wife relationship, the former was endowed with a natural gift for command, and the latter for obedience. It was constitutional, with adequate space for constant negotiation, debate and arbitration, as in the case of normal politics. It was not despotic, like the one between a master and his slave. The husband-wife relationship was exercised in the interests of the members of the household to enable the husband to emerge a winner, reinforcing his dominance as the "head" within the household, while the master-slave relationship was conducted solely for the benefit of the master. A slave had no rational capacity and acquired some intelligence by serving his master. He was not like a child who had potentiality of a deliberative faculty, but would remain dependent on his father as long as his faculty was immature, undeveloped and incomplete. A girl's deliberative faculty, however, remained undeveloped even after she became a woman, which explained her subordination to a man. A son had to be trained to become a free man, a citizen. A daughter's training would be appropriate enough to make her subordinate to her father and then to her husband. The relationship between the father and child was similar to that of a king and his subjects.

Aristotle pointed out that a ruler must possess full and perfect moral virtues. Though moral goodness may be found in all persons, temperance, fortitude and justice were not to the same degree in women as they were in men. He agreed with Sophocles (496—406 BC), reiterating his statement that "a modest silence is a woman's crown" and regarded quietness and modesty as a special form of their goodness. Aristotle was critical of Euripides for assuming that women could be clever and manly, dismissing these as inappropriate. While a man's goodness was goodness in the absolute sense, a woman's goodness remained relative. However, the woman was not a slave. She was a free being, a complement to the man. Though women constituted half of the free population, they were confined to the private sphere of the household since personal family ties were natural.

A woman's rightful place was her house because of her special abilities as a wife, mother and householder. While a man acquired, a woman's function was to "keep and store". In that sense, her role was similar to that of a statesman within the city—preserving what had been acquired and ensuring stability. The family was a sphere of inequality, with differentiation in power and authority arising from sex, age and ability. Interestingly, Aristotle considered the family to be the

seat of inequality, and hierarchy gave rise to the more majestic and important *polis*, the sphere of equality.

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> The family, for Aristotle, was a natural aristocracy where the man had a say on things that were worthy of his consideration, leaving the rest to the woman. Violation of this norm within the family would pervert an aristocratic relationship into an oligarchic one, for self-interest rather than the interest of the community would then become the overriding concern.

A woman as a mother spent a great part of her youth and time in bearing and rearing children, unable to enjoy leisure that a man had, and therefore was decisively disadvantaged. Women were to be excluded from the public realm because their deliberative faculties were inconclusive and lacked authority. Political life, for Aristotle, required participation by those who were equal both with regard to leisure time and possessions, for they had to engage themselves in reasoned discourse about (un)just issues. Women did not have these so they could not play a direct political role. Using this criterion, he also ruled out slaves and workers. "His concern that the public realm serves as the arena for the highest human activities (after philosophy) led to his demand for such an intellectual engagement".

Interestingly, many of these themes were reiterated by Rousseau in his *Emile*. Rousseau too entertained a stereotypical image of women. Since men and women differed sexually their education would also differ. It was astonishing that even extremely gifted individuals like Aristotle and Rousseau could not rise above the prevailing prejudices and localism on the gender question.

Aristotle devoted considerable attention to issues of reproduction when he discussed the city of his dreams. For ensuring the health of the population, he recommended a 20-year gap in marriage, for a man's sexual ability began declining at 70, while a woman's at 50. This gap ensured that one was not reproductively active when the other had been incapacitated. The ideal age for marriage in case of women was 18, and for men 37. Aristotle, like Plato, saw marriage as an arrangement for "the provision of a stock of the healthiest possible bodies for the nurseries of our state". A mother provided *materials* to the child, while a father *the rational soul*, so it was necessary to take into account the father's mental health. He advised women to undertake more physical exercise, for the child in their wombs would draw from their strength totally ignoring their idle minds, thereby implying that the growing child in no way benefited from his mother's mind. Aristotle confused between women's reproductive capacity and their sexual urges.

Aristotle did not, like Plato, advocate equality of the sexes. But this did not mean that he did not accord any role for women. He granted a woman distinct role in society, a position within her family and the home. It was here that she could demonstrate her unique abilities as a wife, mother and a homemaker, preserving and stabilizing the family and home, and giving birth to and educating the young. The woman, though free, was like a slave, for she lacked reason, which was why she should submit to the superior wisdom of men. While a slave helped in the orderly functioning of a household, a, woman managed her family and home:

> Unlike Plato, Aristotle retained the private realm to which the family belonged, as it was crucial. for the pursuit of excellence within the community and provided the foundation of the *polis*. He warned of conflict, dissolution and chaos when the family and women were ignored, as in the instance of the city conceived by Socrates and Plato, or the one that existed in Sparta. It was for this reason that he rejected the Socratic-Platonic conception as being unnatural and detrimental to the health of the

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polis. In fact, he pointed out that the *polis* by its diverse and plural nature differed from the household. Unity was achieved when its differentiated parts worked in harmony according to an overriding principle. However, the unity that Plato aspired for and proposed by eliminating the private sphere would eventually, according to Aristotle, only stifle the city and lead to its extinction.

But a state which becomes progressively more and more of a unity will cease to be a state at all. Plurality of numbers is natural in a state; and the further it moves away from plurality towards unity, the less a state it becomes and the more a household, and the household in turn an individual... so, even if it were possible to make such a unification, it ought not to be done, it will destroy the state.

From the point of view of feminists, both Plato and Aristotle raised a crucial issue. Was the family an instrument or an obstacle to sexual equality? Could the family be the arena in which women could attain freedom and fulfilment? Plato assumed that women could be free only if the institutions of monogamous marriages and private families were abolished. Aristotle, on the contrary, defended the private family vigorously, on the grounds that it made possible for the moral development and the position of women within the household, for which they were best suited, and for the training of children as future citizens. Both viewpoints had their strong adherents and antagonists in the ensuing years, in fact centuries. Interestingly, Aristotle's arguments with regard to the importance of a private sphere and family have been reiterated by the liberals. The liberals, however, disagreed with Aristotle on the position and status of women. Early liberals like Wollstonecraft and J.S. Mill viewed women primarily as homemakers and wives, but argued for equal legal and civil rights and demanded equal opportunities in education, employment and suffrage.

Property

Both Plato and Aristotle regarded economic activity as highly significant for the purpose of political analysis. Economic activity had to be subordinated to political, since the former was concerned with a single good, while political was concerned with good life as a whole in its multidimensional sense. In discussing acquisition of wealth, Aristotle distinguished two modes: natural and unnatural. The natural included hunting (brigandage, fishing, pursuit of birds and bees), grazing and husbandry. It was natural, because nature not only gave them to all individuals for fulfilment of their needs, but also fixed a limit on its consumption in accordance with subsistence.

The intermediate stage was barter, which was natural to the extent of allowing one to acquire whatever was needed for the purposes of life. The use of money, however, led to other forms of acquisition. Retail trade was one form with no limits on acquisition, and hence was an illiberal occupation. Aristotle, following the Greek prejudice, rejected retail trade on moral grounds, for the end of wealth, whether household income or that of a state, should be good life. He was critical of small businessmen, shopkeepers and petty usurers, for they were corrupted by a desire for financial gain. He preferred landed property to trade and commerce. The important thing was not the greater or unlimited, but the right amount of wealth. Aristotle remained sufficiently ambiguous about what could be regarded as the right amount of wealth. Good life was his main focus. He saw an intimate link between the pursuit of bodily pleasures and a man's ethical character. He stressed that material goods were necessary for leading a good and happy life, though they were not an end in themselves. In his scale of values, happiness of the soul was infinitely superior and higher than any other pleasure in the world.

The most basic form of good economic activity was directed towards the use of the product. In this context, Aristotle cited activities like fishing, shoemaking and farming. In activities where the producer and his family directly benefit, in the sense that their needs are fulfilled, it would have use-value. However, as society became more complex, trade increased and specialization of labour became the organizing principle, products were made for purpose of exchange. Thus, products assumed an exchange value in addition to a use-value.

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Aristotle was the first to pay attention to the economic basis of political institutions by focusing on the character and distribution of wealth and its influence on the form of government. He considered extreme inequality of wealth as an important cause for revolutions. He defended private property, but was a great believer in well-distributed wealth.

With the partial exception of the Levellers from Aristotle to the late eighteenth century it was generally agreed that it is the greatest blessing for a state that its members should possess a moderate and adequate property.

Distributive Justice

Both Plato and Aristotle believed that the primary task of a state was to ensure justice. Aristotle distinguished between distributive, and corrective or rectificatory or remedial justice.

Distributive justice meant that offices and wealth, rewards and dues were distributed among different social classes according to their contributions based on merit, defined in accordance with the spirit of the constitution. In an oligarchy, merit meant wealth, while in an aristocracy, it was related to virtue. In an ideal state, merit meant virtue. Since in Aristotle's perception the objective end of the state was to ensure and promote good life, the group that contributed most to this end could legitimately claim most of society's honours. On this premise, he believed that a virtuous minority or an aristocracy supplied the most direct and significant benefits to society. In the last resort, it would also mean the enthronement of one person with supreme virtue, or an absolute divine monarchy. Besides virtue and wealth, Aristotle recognized freedom as an important criterion with regard to the end of the state. Freedom meant free birth, and also being independent of others.

Did u know? Justice, for Aristotle, was a complete virtue, though not absolute. It was in relation to one's neighbour. The social character of virtue was "universal" justice or lawfulness.

Aristotle agreed with Plato's assertion that only virtue and wisdom ought to be criteria of who would rule and exercise political power, but wondered how to approximate it in practice. Although Aristotle identified virtue as the ultimate qualification for office, he allowed for the enfranchisement of popular and oligarchic elements as well. He tried to assimilate the two doctrines of distributive justice that prevailed during his time. One was the democrats' assertion that equality derived from free birth, or that each would count for one, and no one for more than one. The other was the oligarchs' view that superiority in one represented superiority in others as well. The two principles of equality and superiority could be made compatible, if both were subordinated to justice.

Distributive justice set forth in the *Politics* clearly recognized the contribution of each major unit to society and its unique claim to political participation—while numbers mattered in popular claims, wealth was an important component in an oligarchic claim, and virtue in an aristocratic claim—thus giving a share to everyone in the political process. The allotment of honours was based on the relative assets of each group. The principle of mean balanced the political opportunity of the few, many and the rich, and was infinitely superior to the partisan principle offered in an unmixed or pure constitution.

Distributive justice meant proportionate equality, and was linked to a theory of just rewards or equal shares according to the merit of its recipients. Each person would be awarded responsibilities as well as financial benefits in proportion to one's just deserts.

The advantage of Aristotle's doctrine is that it satisfied the demands of social justice in both aspects: the point of proportionate equality is more equitable than the democrats' conception of

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mere numerical equality. Similarly the idea of special privilege which his doctrine introduces is more justifiable than the oligarch's claim that either wealth or noble birth by itself deserves the highest rewards .... Proportionate equality is grounded in the principle of fair and reasonable inequality of treatment.

Rectificatory or remedial justice was meted out by a judge in matters like contracts or criminal law, where the merit of a person was not the consideration. The important fact was that all persons would be treated in a manner of equal merit. Aristotle regarded equality as crucial to social justice, and justice as central to equality.

Inequality, for Aristotle, arose when equals were treated unequally, and unequals equally. It accepted the belief that individuals differed in capacities, interests and achievements. Moreover, the varied dimensions of human life—social, cultural and economic—differed in importance. It was necessary to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving. He tried to counter the principle of equality by justifying inequalities. The reason was twofold. One, the desire for equality was more in the nature of a wish rather than being grounded in reality. Second, even if one accepted the demand of equality as a moral one, it still failed to be convincing for it contradicted "the spirit of morality with its presupposition of men's different stations and functions, especially their obligations and duties of obedience on the one hand and their rights and positions of authority on the other".

Rule of Law and Constitution

Aristotle was categorical that a rightly constituted law was the final authority, and that personal authority was only desirable if for some reason it was not easy to codify laws to meet all general contingencies. Aristotle's ideal was constitutionally-based order. Laws were less arbitrary and fairer, since these were impersonal as compared to rule by a person. "[t]he rule of law is preferable to that of a single citizen: even if it be the better course to have individuals ruling, they should be made law-guardians or ministers of the laws".

Aristotle contended that a free political relationship was one where the subject did not totally surrender his judgement and responsibility, for both the ruler and the ruled had a defined legal status. The "passionless authority of law" gave to the magistrate and the subject a moral quality and dignity respectively. A constitutional ruler, unlike a dictator, ruled over his willing subjects by consent:

> The relation of the constitutional ruler to his subjects is different in kind from any sort of subjection because it is consistent with both parties remaining free men, and for this reason it requires a degree of moral equality or likeness of kind between them, despite the undoubted differences which must exist.

The authority that was wielded by a constitutional ruler over one's subject was different from the one that the master wielded over his slave, since the latter lacked reason to rule himself. Political authority also differed from the authority that a husband exercised over his wife and children. Aristotle contended that a serious flaw in Plato's reasoning was his failure to distinguish political authority from that of household, as evident from Plato's comment in the *Statesman* that the state was like a family writ large. A child, not yet an adult, would not be entitled to being treated as an equal. Women, being inferior, were unequal to men. A political relationship was one of equality. On the contrary, an ideal state would not be constitutional or political if the differences between its members were so great that they did not have the same virtue. An ideal state is "an association of equals, and only of equals, and its object is the best and highest life possible (in which the slave cannot share). The highest good is felicity; and that consists in the energy and perfect practice of goodness".

Constitutional rule had three main elements. First, it was a rule in the general or common interest of the populace, as compared to a rule by a faction or a tyrant which was in the interest of a ruler, one or few. Since it was lawful, a government was carried on in accordance with general regulations

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and not by arbitrary decrees. Moreover, a government could not act contrary to the constitution. Third, constitutional government meant willing subjects ruled by consent, rather than by force.

Aristotle took a cue from Plato's suggestion in the *Laws* that laws were necessary for a moral and civilized life. Civility of law was possible if one perceived law as wisdom accumulated over the ages and generations resulting from customs, both written and unwritten. For Aristotle, "experience must represent a genuine growth in knowledge, though this growth registers itself in custom rather than in science and is produced by common-sense rather than by learning. Public opinion must be admitted to be not only an unavoidable force but also, up to a point, a justifiable standard in politics". Aristotle, unlike Plato, contended that the collective wisdom of the people was superior to that of the wisest ruler or legislator, for "the reason oi the statesman in a good state cannot be detached from the reason embodied in the law and custom of the community he rules".

A constitution for Aristotle was not only a basic law determining the structure of its government and allocation of powers between the different branches within a government, but it also reflected a way of life. A constitution gave an identity to the *polis*, which meant that a change in the constitution brought about a change in the *polis:*

> For, since the *polis* is a community of citizens in a constitution, when the constitution of the citizens changes and becomes different in kind the *polis* also does. We may compare this with a chorus, which may at one time perform in a tragedy and at another in a comedy and so be different in kind, yet all the while be composed of the same person.

A political community, like all other communities, involved concerted actions and joint activity working towards a common purpose. It could be distinguished from other associations by the fact that it had a supreme authority, which was defined along with the common purpose by its constitution. A constitution could be described as "an organization of offices in a state, by which the method of their distribution is fixed, the sovereign authority is determined, and the nature of the end to be pursued by the association and all its members is prescribed".

From the foregoing paragraphs, it would be evident that a constitution had two aspects: the ethical or the aims and goals to be pursued by a community; and the institutional or the structure of political institutions and offices, and the distribution of power. In its ethical sense, a constitution, for Aristotle, provided the identity of a state, for it examined the relationship between a good citizen and a good man. As a result, different constitutions required different kinds of good citizens, whereas a good man was always the same. Only under an ideal constitution was there an identity between a good man and a good citizen. A good citizen was one who possessed the moral wisdom to become a good ruler and a good subject. A state was a moral institution contributing to the realization of the moral qualities in its citizens.

The institutional aspect involved the determination of the sovereign power and the allocation of powers among the offices. The most important institution was a civic body, which was sovereign. Every constitution had to contain three elements, namely deliberative, the official or magisterial, and the judicial. The deliberative had four functions:

1. It was responsible for the most important decisions in foreign policy, matters of war and peace, and the making and breaking of alliances.
2. Making and interpreting laws.
3. Administration of severe penalties, such as death, exile and confiscation of property.
4. Election of magistrates and their examination on completion of their term.

Aristotle assigned a comprehensive array of powers to the deliberative branch of government, since it was supreme. It controlled the magistrates and the courts by controlling the laws that regulated their functions, and by retaining the power to decide judicial and executive issues.

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Aristotle analyzed and compared 158 constitutions, thereby uniting the empirical and speculative modes of enquiry. He built on Plato's classification of constitutions in the *Statesman* by taking into account the ends of a constitution and the number who wielded political power. Constitutions promoting general well-being of the governed were true or good, whereas those that fettered the interests of the ruler were bad or perverted. A government ruled by one, few or many in the general interest of the community was monarchy, aristocracy and polity respectively. Conversely, a government ruled by one, few or many in the self-interest of the ruler was tyranny, oligarchy and democracy respectively. In each of these true and perverted constitutions, merit within the system of distributive justice was defined in a particular way befitting the constitution.

Aristotle regarded monarchy as a true form of government, for it was possible to have a virtuous person as a ruler who would be able to stand outside the law and be its single guardian. However, he pointed out, historically, public interest even in a monarchy was best secured through a system of rules framed by a legislator who would also be the founder of the city. He was generally skeptical of finding a virtuous person who could be a monarch. He distinguished five types of kingship. The first was the Spartan model where the kings were responsible for military and religious matters. The second was a mixture of kingship and tyranny, to be found among the barbarians. The third was dictatorship, which existed in the early part of Greek history. The fourth kind, associated with the heroic age, was kingship which was hereditary and ruled by law. Initially, they wielded unlimited powers, with the king being a judge with powers to control religion, but eventually their powers got circumscribed. The fifth one was absolute kingship, or rule by one person who controlled everything.

For Aristotle, a monarchy developed into an aristocracy, which was a true form of rule by a few. There were three kinds of aristocracy, all of which were mixed constitutions employing, besides virtue, other principles. The first kind, as seen in Carthage, combined virtue with wealth and number. The second, as in Sparta, combined virtue with the democratic principle of freedom. The third combined wealth with freedom, and was more oligarchic. The third form of true government was polity, a kind of mixed rule in which the claims of the many and the propertied were held in check by law.

As far as perverted forms of government were concerned, tyranny— defined as the arbitrary power of an individual responsible to none, governing all alike, whether equals or better, for its own advantage, not that of its subjects, and therefore against their will—was a perfect counterpart of monarchy. Tyranny degenerated into an oligarchy with the interest of the few, the rich being the sole concern. Aristotle described four types of oligarchy. The first was a moderate one, close to a polity, where the rulers ruled in accordance with law. Access to office was based on property, which was not restrictive. For higher offices, Aristotle recommended a large share, and a smaller one, for low but essential offices. The second one was more exclusive. It was the rich and the few who enjoyed few benefits. The third one was still more restrictive and narrow, with the hereditary governing elite. The fourth one was a small rich coterie which ruled without laws.

The third and the "least bad" of perverted forms of government was democracy, the rule by the poor and the majority. This was because the many, "when they meet together may very likely be better than the few good, if regarded not individually but collectively, just as a feast to do which many contribute is better than a dinner provided out of a single purse".

The many contrary to one, or the expert, was a better judge of policies including music and poetry. Tyranny was the worst of the perverted forms.

Aristotle contended that there was a difference between democracy and polity, between rule by the best (aristocracy) and rule by the richest (oligarchy). The difference between a monarchy and a tyranny was an ethical one. Monarchy was better than an aristocracy, which in turn was better than a polity. Tyranny was worse than an oligarchy, which in turn was worse than a democracy. Aristotle thereby provided qualified support for democracy.

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While actual governments were bad, democratic government tended to be the best. Here again he described four kinds of democracy, which follow a progression from a moderate to an extreme one. Moderate democracy had some sort of property qualifications for officials, with the majority of people being agricultural and unmindful of political offices. The second type was similar to the first one, but without property qualifications for officials and granting everyone the right to hold office as long as they were not disqualified by birth. There would be no payment for performance of public duties, and government was governed in accordance with law. In the third kind, citizenship qualifications were relaxed to include all freemen, including aliens and children of emancipated slaves, who were excluded from the first two types. In an extreme democracy, all restraints were removed, being totally lawless with full rights to demagogues.

In Aristotle, there was hardly a discussion of the ideal type except sketchy details, but a concern with the best practicable state, pointing out that a monarchy and aristocracy were best suited for ideal forms of state, since goodness was their aim. Moreover, monarchy of the ideal type was suited to domestic rather than political rule. Aristotle believed that politics, like all arts and sciences, had to not only consider the ideal constitution, but also know what was practicable and enduring under the given circumstances. In considering the feasibility of a constitution, Aristotle took into account the virtue and intelligence that an average individual possessed:

> The whole bent and bias of his thought must be toward the view that the ideal while conceded to be an effective force, must still be a force within the actual current of affairs and not dead against it... . The ideal state represented a conception of political philosophy which he inherited from Plato and which was in fact little congenial to his genius. The more he struck out an independent line of thought and investigation, the more he turned towards the analysis and description of actual constitutions. The great collection of one hundred and fifty eight constitutional histories made by him and his students marks the turning point in his thought and suggested a broader conception of political theory. This did not mean that Aristotle turned to description alone. The essence of the new conception was the uniting of empirical investigation with the more speculative consideration of political ideals. Moral ideals—the sovereignty of law, the freedom and equality of citizens, constitutional government, the perfecting of men in a civilized life—are always for Aristotle the ends for which the state ought to exist, what he discovered was that these ideals were infinitely complicated in the realization and required infinite adjustments to the conditions of actual government. Ideals must exist not like Plato's pattern in the Heavens but as forces working in and through agencies by no means ideal.

Plato classified governments on the basis of their law-abidingness, while Aristotle used the criterion of general welfare and the number who wielded political power. For Aristotle, "there are two distinct claims to power, one based upon the rights of property and the other upon the welfare of the greater number of human beings". The correction to Plato's formal classification enabled Aristotle to consider the justifiable claims to power in a state by adjusting and accommodating all claimants. He did not question Plato's proposition that wisdom and virtue had an absolute claim to power, and tried to make it operative in practice. For Aristotle, a state ought to realize justice in its fullest and largest sense, for justice meant equality.

Aristotle granted an absolute moral claim to power to those who possessed wealth, for the state was not a trading company or a contract. He rejected Plato's solution of community of property as disastrous, and pointed out that there was not much of a difference between a plundering democracy and an exploitative oligarchy. However, he thought it unrealistic and unwise not to protect property, since property guaranteed good birth, sound education, reasonable associations and leisure. While the proprietied had an important claim to political power, equally convincing was the argument of democrats that numbers did matter. Aristotle concluded that no class had an absolute claim to

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power, for the law was sovereign. But law was relative to its constitution. A good state would have good laws, and conversely a bad state would have bad laws:

> Legality itself then is only a relative guarantee of goodness, better than force or personal power, but quite possibly bad. A good state must be ruled according to law but this is not the same as saying that a state ruled according to law is good.

Among the ideal types, Aristotle concentrated on monarchy rather than aristocracy. Monarchy would be the best form if a wise and a virtuous king could be found. Being a god among humans, the monarch ought to be allowed to make laws. To ostracize and check the monarch would be unjust. It would be best to allow the monarch to rule, but Aristotle was not sure whether to grant anybody the *absolute* right to rule. So much was his belief in equality between citizens in a given state, that he made no exception even when it came to perfect virtue. The principle of equality would have to be the ordering principle of both good and perverted governments.

In Book IV, Aristotle identified social class as another criterion while defining constitutions. By social classes he meant the rich, poor and occupational groups, such as farmers, artisans and merchants. He took into account economic factors, seeing them as decisively influencing the political system. "He long ago pointed out that the constitution of a state had its roots in what the moderns term as its social system".

In considering actual states, Aristotle clearly distinguished the ethical from the political and placed great importance on the constitution as an arrangement of offices. Subsequently, he distinguished law from the political structure of an organized government. He separated the political from the economic and social structure, thereby explicitly stating the separation of state from society:

> He was able to use the distinction in a highly realistic fashion when he shrewdly remarked that a political constitution is one thing and the way the constitution actually works is another. A government democratic in form may govern oligarchically, while an oligarchy may govern democratically.

Polity

An analysis of the political factors in a democracy and an oligarchy enabled Aristotle to consider the form of government that would be suitable to a large number of states, assuming that for its realization no more virtue or political skill was needed than what the states could gather. Though not an ideal, it was the best practicable state in accordance with his principle of the golden mean, obviating the extreme tendencies within oligarchic and democratic systems. This was called polity or constitutional government, a name given to moderate democracy in Book III.

Aristotle distinguished between a democracy and an oligarchy by referring to them as majority and minority rule. Democracy was a constitution with a majority government which the free-born and poor controlled. In an oligarchy, government was controlled by a minority, namely the rich and the better-born. Democracy did not exclude the rich or well-born from holding office or participating in politics. Oligarchy usually imposed qualifications for voting and holding offices.

Aristotle accepted the presence of a wealthy class and relatively poor citizens as inevitable. But from the viewpoint of political stability, it was necessary to enlarge a group that was neither rich nor poor, namely the middle class. The rich enjoyed great benefits and privileges, but were unwilling to accept discipline. The poor, because of their deprivation, lacked spirit and enthusiasm. Therefore, the middle class constituted the mean in the social structure, not only balancing the oligarchic and democratic elements, but also mixing them in the right proportion so as to ensure stability. The middle class was a countervailing force, neutralizing the centrifugal tendencies generated by contending forces which, if unchecked, would lead to the demise of the city. The larger the middle class, the greater the possibility of tranquillity and stability in the state, for it steered a middle path between the insolence of the rich and the unruly behaviour of the bitterly poor. Aristotle agreed with Euripides' description of the middle class states as "save states", and observed:

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> In all states there may be distinguished three parts, or classes, of the citizen body—the very rich, the very poor and the middle class which forms the mean ... as a general principle the moderation and the mean are always the best ... in ownership of all gifts of fortune a middle position will be the best. Men who are in this condition are the most ready to listen to reason. Those who belong to either extreme ... find it hard to follow reason ... those who enjoy too many advantages ... are unwilling to obey and ignorant how to obey. This is a defect which appears in them from the first, during childhood and in home life; nurtured in luxury, they never acquire a habit of discipline, even in the matter of lessons. But there are also defects in those who suffer from the opposite extreme of a lack of advantages: they are far too mean and too poor spirited. We have this, on the one hand, people who are ignorant how to rule and only know to obey, as if they were so many slaves, and, on the other hand, people who are ignorant how to obey any sort of authority and only know how to rule as if they were masters of slaves. The result is a state of envy on the one side and on the other contempt. Nothing could be further removed from the spirit of friendship or the temper of a political community.

Aristotle's solution of putting the middle class in power flowed from his observations that in an oligarchy, the rich were fined if they did not serve as judges and the poor were given no pay, whereas in a democracy the poor were paid and the rich were not fined. Both these were extreme practices. It was important to find a mean where the poor were given a moderate pay, while the rich were fined at the same time. It was the middle class which provided the common ground and was crucial to the societal mix. A stable society had to balance forces of quality and quantity. Quality referred to an exclusive category of birth, wealth, property, social position or education, while quantity meant numbers, the claims of the mass of people to political participation. Through a combination of the lot (elections, property qualifications and relative merit), he hoped that a balance could be attained and maintained in the realm of policy formulations and execution. The historical model that Aristotle had in mind for the polity was the one drafted in 411 BC at a time when democracy was temporarily eclipsed in Athens.

Aristotle saw in rule by the middle class fulfilment of two important political ideals: equality, and consensus. Its civility would smoothen the rough edges in society, for it would know how to simultaneously command and obey as free people. It would be a bulwark against selfishness, tyranny, unlawfulness and instability. For Aristotle, since any state was better than an anarchy, he preferred a mixed state to a pure one more, for that was more enduring.

The polity reflects a kind of condensation of his practical political wisdom Much of its basis is to be found in Plato's Statesman and Laws; ... . In its balance caution, and absence of any adventurous spirit, the polity is almost a perfect epitome of Aristotle's ethical-political position.

A polity took into account freedom, wealth, culture, noble birth, and numerical superiority. It also gave scope for the attainment of goodness. It symbolized the principle of Mean or moderation or the middle-way principles of practical politics. Popper viewed Aristotle's best state as a compromise between three things: a romantic Platonic aristocracy, a "sound and balanced" feudalism, and some democratic ideas; but feudalism has the best of it. The reason for Popper's assessment was because Aristotle excluded slaves and producers from the citizen body, though he conceded the right of participation to all citizens. Like Plato, he argued that the working class could not rule, and that the ruling class should not work nor earn any money. They could own land but not work on it. He defended the right of the leisured class to rule.

Citizenship

Aristotle placed the theme of citizenship at the centre of his political analysis because of his belief in a law-based government. This was contrary to Plato, who ignored the issue and placed greater

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faith on philosophic rule. Aristotle characterized political authority as constitutional between equals, and since an individual was a political animal who found fulfilment only within a *polis*, it was natural for people to aspire for political positions. Constitutional government with respect to citizenship rights allowed people to compete for political office without civil chaos.

Aristotle defined a state as a collective body of citizens. Citizenship was not to be determined by residence, since the resident aliens and slaves also shared a common residence with citizens, but were not citizens. Nor could citizenship be defined by the share one had in civic rights, to the extent of being entitled to sue and be sued in courts of law, for this right belonged to aliens as well. A citizen was one who enjoyed the *right to share in the deliberative or judicial offices*, and was able to exercise his political rights effectively. A citizen also enjoyed constitutional rights under the system of public law.

For Aristotle, a citizen was one who shared power in the *polis*, and unlike Plato, did not distinguish between "an active ruling group and a politically passive community". Aristotle stipulated that the young and the old could not be citizens, for one was immature and the other infirm. He did not regard women as citizens, for they lacked the deliberative faculty and the leisure to understand the working of politics. As far as the working class was concerned, though some states made them citizens, they clearly did not have the aptitude nor the leisure to display the true excellence to shoulder civic responsibilities. A good citizen would have the intelligence and the ability to rule and be ruled. He, however, shared with Plato the perception that citizenship was a privilege and a status to be inherited.

Aristotle pointed out that in order to discharge functions effectively, citizens would inhabit a *polis* that was compact and close-knit. He was critical of Plato's prescription that a citizen body of 5000 would be the ideal, for that was too large and would require unlimited space, such as the sprawling lands of Babylon, rendering impossible functions like military command, public communications and judicial pronouncements. A cohesive citizen body, where everybody would know one another intimately, would be able to settle disputes effectively and satisfactorily, and distribute political offices according to the merit of the candidates. The quality of citizenship would suffer in a larger political community due to lack of intimacy.

Aristotle described a good citizen as someone who could live in harmony with the constitution, and had sufficient leisure time to devote himself to the tasks and responsibilities of citizenship. He regarded the existence of diversity of interests within a citizen body as essential to the practice of citizenship, for it was through a balance of these interests that good government was attained. A good citizen would possess virtue or moral goodness that would help in realizing a selfless and cooperative civic life. He regarded citizenship as a:

> ... bond forged by the intimacy of participation in public affairs. The bond was moreover a relationship which was guarded with some jealousy by those privileged to enjoy it. It was neither a right to be claimed nor a status to be conferred on anybody outside the established ranks of the class, no matter how worthy such an outsider might be. Indeed, Greek citizenship depended not so much on rights which could be claimed as on responsibilities which had with pride to be shouldered (Heater 1990: 4).

Both Plato and Aristotle pleaded for responsible and effective forms of education for citizenship. This, they considered, was a cure for the corruption and political instability of their times. They were equally critical of the casual manner in which the Athenian state regarded the tasks of citizenship. As a corrective measure, both prescribed state-managed and state-controlled education. In the *Laws*, Plato made it clear that the guardian of laws controlled the educational system by selecting teachers only from among those who were willing to teach the laws and traditions of the state in a manner determined by the guardians. Both Plato and Aristotle were committed to the idea of state-controlled education. They "believed that different styles of civic education should be used

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for different purposes. Plato emphasized training in self-sacrifice for rulers and obedience for the ruled; Aristotle emphasized the need to match the educational objectives to the form of government".

4.3 Theory of Revolution

Aristotle was born in Stageira, Chalcidice, in 384 BC, about 55 km (34 mi) east of modern-day Thessaloniki. His father Nicomachus was the personal physician to King Amyntas of Macedon. Aristotle was trained and educated as a member of the aristocracy. At about the age of eighteen, he went to Athens to continue his education at Plato's Academy. Aristotle remained at the academy for nearly twenty years before quitting Athens in 348/47 BC. The traditional story about his departure reports that he was disappointed with the direction the academy took after control passed to Plato's nephew Speusippus upon his death, although it is possible that he feared anti-Macedonian sentiments and left before Plato had died. He then traveled with Xenocrates to the court of his friend Hermias of Atarneus in Asia Minor. While in Asia, Aristotle traveled with Theophrastus to the island of Lesbos, where together they researched the botany and zoology of the island. Aristotle married Hermias's adoptive daughter (or niece) Pythias. She bore him a daughter, whom they named Pythias. Soon after Hermias' death, Aristotle was invited by Philip II of Macedon to become the tutor to his son Alexander the Great in 343 BC.

Together with Plato and Socrates (Plato's teacher), Aristotle is one of the most important founding figures in Western philosophy. Aristotle's writings were the first to create a comprehensive system of Western philosophy, encompassing morality and aesthetics, logic and science, politics and metaphysics.

Aristotle's views on the physical sciences profoundly shaped medieval scholarship, and their influence extended well into the Renaissance, although they were ultimately replaced by Newtonian physics. In the zoological sciences, some of his observations were confirmed to be accurate only in the 19th century. His works contain the earliest known formal study of logic, which was incorporated in the late 19th century into modern formal logic. In metaphysics, Aristotelianism had a profound influence on philosophical and theological thinking in the Islamic and Jewish traditions in the Middle Ages, and it continues to influence Christian theology, especially the scholastic tradition of the Catholic Church. His ethics, though always influential, gained renewed interest with the modern advent of virtue ethics. All aspects of Aristotle's philosophy continue to be the object of active academic study today. Though Aristotle wrote many elegant treatises and dialogues (Cicero described his literary style as "a river of gold").

Did u know? Aristotle was a Greek philosopher, a student of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. His writings cover many subjects, including physics, metaphysics, poetry, theater, music, logic, rhetoric, linguistics, politics, government, ethics, biology, and zoology.

Revolution: Causes and Remedies

The search for stability through polity made Aristotle examine the causes for instability, change and revolution, and prescribe remedies against unnecessary and incessant change. Unlike Plato, who did not accept change and equated it with decay and corruption, Aristotle on the contrary regarded change as inevitable. Change represented movement towards an ideal. Unlike Plato, Aristotle accepted the possibility of progress. Things changed because they had the potential to inch towards perfection. Aristotle derived his conception of change from his understanding of science and nature:

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> The Idea or Form is *in* the thing (like the adult in the embryo), not outside. The destiny of a thing is foretold by its hidden unrealized essence. Evolution proceeds as it does, not because of material causes producing natural consequences, pushing them on ... but by final causes pulling them ahead... . All the things that exist are directed toward an end (which is potentially inside of them); their development is shaped by a purpose. The world is gradually realized because of a transcendental Design, or call it Divine Providence.

Aristotle realized that mechanism and purpose are complementary and inseparable aspects; in the study of nature one must seek for a mechanical explanation or for the leading reason; sometimes the mechanism is clearer, sometimes the reason. In his time practically no mechanism (for example, a physiologic mechanism) was conceivable; hence, there remained only the teleological explanation.

Stability and revolution were important in Aristotle's agenda of political ideals, having perceived a constitution as containing the essence of a state. Aristotle discussed general causes of revolution and then looked into the reasons why individual constitutions changed. Unlike Plato, Aristotle perceived multiple reasons for revolutions, rather than simply a regime's prominent deficiency. He placed greater responsibility on the rulers to ensure stability and justice. The criterion of stability was not majority support for a constitution, but the fact that no class or faction favoured violent change.

Revolution could take the form of change in the constitution of a state, or the revolutionaries may leave the constitution unchanged, and remain content with just accruing more power for themselves. Revolution could make an oligarchy more or less oligarchic and a democracy more or less democratic. It could be directed against a particular institution or a set of persons in a state keeping the form of government intact. The general causes of revolutions were broadly categorized into three.

1. Psychological motives or the state of mind.
2. The objectives in mind.
3. The occasions that gave rise to political upheaval and mutual strife.

The *psychological factors* were the desire for equality in an oligarchy, and inequality in a democracy. The *objectives* in mind included profit, honour, insolence, fear, superiority in some form, contempt, disproportionate increase in some part of the state, election intrigues, wilful negligence, neglect of apparently insignificant changes, fear of opposites and dissimilarity of component parts of the state. The *occasions* that gave rise to revolutionary changes were insolence, desire for profit and honour, superiority, fear, contempt, and disproportionate increase in one part or element of the state.

The particular causes were analyzed in each individual constitution. In a democracy, the unchecked licence given to demagogues, who attack the rich and instigate the masses, was the cause. It could be remedied by granting the right to vote to the poor and the disadvantaged, giving them a stake in the government. In an oligarchy, the oppression of the masses and the dissensions within the ruling elite led to instability. In an aristocracy, the policy of narrowing the circle of government was a cause of instability. Sedition arose when: (*a*) the rank and file of people were exalted by the idea that they were just as worthy as their rulers; (*b*) when great men were dishonoured by those in office; (*c*) when high-spirited individuals were excluded from honours; and (*d*) when some within the governing class were poor and the others rich. Aristocracies were prone to change when they deviated from the notion of justice, namely a balance between oligarchic and democratic forces as delineated by the constitution.

An aristocracy might change into a democracy when the poor got the impression that they were treated unfairly, compelling them to revolt. In a monarchy, sedition was usually due to fear, contempt, and desire for fame, insults, hatred and desire by neighbouring states to extend their boundaries.

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The remedy for preventing a revolution in a monarchy was by inculcating a spirit of obedience to law, especially in small matters, and to distrust charlatans and demagogues. In case of oligarchies and aristocracies, the remedy was in ensuring that rulers were on good terms both with the civic body and those who had constitutional rights. None would be raised too high above the level of his fellow citizens, for inequalities of offices and honours, more than inequities in wealth, drive men to rebellion. Small honours would have to be conferred over a long period of time, ensuring that none became very influential in rapid succession. A magistrate would be appointed to keep vigil over those who did not live in a manner that was in harmony with the spirit of the constitution. In order to neutralize the consequences of a flourishing social group, the management of the state could be given to those who were not doing so well, or by fusing the rich and the poor sections of society, or by strengthening the middle class. A tyrant could prevent instability through a divide-and-rule policy, encouraging class hatred between the rich and the poor, and creating a strong spy system. He would have to appear to be religious, erect public works for the employment of the poor, cut down on lavish expenses and observe conventional rites and practices. In his advice to the tyrant, he anticipated Machiavelli.

Task What was the general cause for the revolution?

Aristotle pointed out that the source of revolutions and seditions was usually the image of the government. Care would have to be taken to prevent offices from being used for personal gain. In the interest of constitutional stability, three qualities were required for office-bearers in high positions, and these were: (*a*) loyalty to the established constitution, (*b*) outstanding administrative capacity, and (*c*) integrity of character, goodness and justice in forms. Repeatedly, he emphasized on a fusion between oligarchic and democratic forces. He also recommended government propaganda in education, respect for law even in small things, and justice in law and administration, i.e. equality according to one's contributions, as measures to prevent revolutions.

Self-Assessment

Choose the correct option:

1. By practical science Aristotle means
   (*i*) Ethics and politics (*ii*) Study of poetry
   (*iii*) Physics and Mathematics (*iv*) All of these
2. A natural slave's chief use was of his
   (*i*) Spirit (*ii*) Body (*iii*) Mind (*iv*) None of these
3. Oligarchy is a form of state rule by
   (*i*) The best (*ii*) The richest (*iii*) Both (*i*) and (*ii*) (*iv*) None of these
4. Pythias is the name of Aristothe's
   (*i*) Daughter (*ii*) Friend (*iii*) Uncle (*iv*) None of these.

4.4 Summary

- For Aristotle, the true end of an individual was happiness, while the end of a state was self-sufficiency, which could be achieved by moderation in its wealth, size, constitution and ruling group. The best individual was one who had realized his nature. The best regime was one which realized or had achieved the quintessence of its nature. There was an intimate link

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between the human being and the state, for the former by nature was a social person with an instinct of sociability, while "the state was a natural institution within which the development and the fulfilment of the individual was possible. It was natural because it offered conditions of good life, the true end of all associations. Green and Bosanquet, the nineteenth-century British Idealists, developed this argument in detail. For Aristotle, ethics and politics were complementary. Ethics studied the virtues that made up a good individual, whereas politics studied institutions that enabled individuals to find their true potential. Though contemplation for Aristotle was the highest form of activity, he still probed into the practical good of an individual's social relations and existence. Like Plato, the societal dimension was never lost in his theory.

- Aristotle's main focus was on the best practicable state or constitution. In the *Laws*, Plato contended that the mixed constitution was the best and most stable regime, a panacea against the cycle of development and degeneration that was implicit in the six fold scheme. Aristotle adopted the scheme, perfected and elaborated it, and since then it:

  ... has served as a basic taxonomy through the ages and into the 19th century ... . It is the first explanatory theory in the history of political science, in which institutions, attitudes, and ideas, are related to process and performance. It is the ancestor of separation of powers theory.

- Of the six regimes, Aristotle saw only four as being important: oligarchy, democracy, polity and tyranny. Aristocracy was the ideal, but difficult to achieve and even harder to sustain. Hence polity, or the mixed constitution, was the best for it reconciled virtue with stability, quantity with quality. Tyranny was the worst. He reinforced his arguments by pointing out that the social structures of cities differed according to their economies, occupations, professions and statuses, but these variations could be reduced in terms of the rich and poor sections of citizens. If the rich dominated it, then it became an oligarchy, and when the poor controlled affairs it became a democracy. When the middle sections held the reigns of authority, extreme forces were ruled out, guaranteeing inbuilt stability. Aristotle's faith in the middle class has been reiterated in the writings of Smith and the English Classical economists. The theme of mixed constitution has been repeated subsequently in the writings of Polybius, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-143 BC), St. Aquinas, and Machiavelli.
- Aristotle was a vigorous critic of democracy but still offered a fair assessment of its advantages. To enumerate some, collective opinions and judgements were more satisfying than individual ones that many rather than few would rule. Its disadvantage was the treatment meted out to the extraordinary. However, he did not, like Plato, fear the mass of people and had more faith in their ability to collectively articulate their judgement on the effects of policies and the ability of the rulers. Here, Aristotle echoed Pericles, who had faith in the ability of the ordinary citizen.
- Aristotle defended the rule of law, for it provided stability and reason as opposed to passion. The distinction that he made between numerical and proportionate equality, distributive and corrective justice, the importance of liberal education and leisure, limitations on wealth Without undermining the right of property, the distinction between use-value and exchange value, the difference between a good man and a good citizen, the importance of property qualifications with regard to citizenship, have been extremely influential in subsequent political discourse.
- Every aspect of justice had a twofold natural foundation: (*a*) relation to the political community in which each man occupied a position, fulfilled a function and value in proportion to the share of social goods; and (*b*) private relations with other men whereby every man possessed

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the same right as others to enjoy a certain number of elementary and inalienable goods. "If the exercise of the rights of the citizen demands respect for proportionality and universal, and this therefore can only belong to all men as such" (cited in Heinaman 1998: 647).

- Human nature had twofold variations and was inwardly diversified in its political manifestations, though at the same time it was similar everywhere in the right it conferred on each man to realize, even if in different ways, the capacities inherent in his human essence. This meant that though Aristotle was a believer in the natural inequality of human beings, yet he accepted that there were areas of commonality, as everybody had capacities in different fields. In this sense he pleaded for functional categorization, with the hidden manifestation of equality in ordinary interaction within civil society. This, in modern terminology is referred to as the rule of law. Pointing to the ancient roots of modern constitutionalism as reflected in the US Constitution Shklar traced its origins to ancient Greece and observed that "the very idea of the rule of law depends on Aristotelian logic, that is, syllogistic reasoning".
- It was true that Aristotle's political perceptions did not mirror the dramatic and tumultuous changes occurring in the Greek world. His pupil Alexander the Great was building an empire, but Aristotle continued to see the city state as the natural institution for human sociability. He was an admirer of the Athenian model. In fact, his entire political philosophy rejected the cosmopolitan and imperial model of Alexander. It was also a fact that, analyzed in the context of the immediate aftermath, Aristotle was totally forgotten. The reason for this was the narrow base of Greek politics, leading to the exclusion of large segments of society, and the politics of withdrawal as exemplified by the non-political philosophies developed by the Cynics, Epicureans, Skeptics and Stoics.
- The Skeptics and Stoics were critical of Aristotle. They thought that his prescriptions ignored the diversity that was found in the world. They were critical of him for projecting the moral values of the Athenian middle class as universal. The criticism of Aristotle gathered momentum in the fifteenth century, but this was more on medieval Aristotelians and not on Aristotle himself. However, in the sixteenth century Aristotle himself was attacked by writers like Justus Lipsus (1547-1606), Pierre Charron (1541-1603) and Michel de Montaigue (1533-1592). Charron went to the extent of criticizing Aristotle for propounding absurd notions. Grotius rejected Aristotle's principles of a minimum core as being inadequate in formulating important concepts like benevolence: By 1640, many Catholic and Protestant theologians developed a skeptical criticism of Aristotle. He was portrayed as a false philosopher, for his prescriptions were based on reason rather than faith. Hobbes rejected the ethical foundations of Aristotelians and the Humanists on the grounds of self-preservation. For Hobbes, Aristotle's theory was an impediment to scientific investigation and "with this complaint Hobbes rejects the whole Aristotelian epistemology of matter and form, essence and existence".
- The conserving and realistic elements in Aristotle's philosophy were his defence of slavery and confining women within their homes and families. This was because he believed in natural hierarchy among human beings and that individuals differed in their abilities, capacities and intelligence. However, he also realized that slavery was a temporary institution, whose need and utility would be lost with revolution in machinery.
- "Aristotle's *Politics* has served as a foundation work for the whole Western tradition" (Edel 1968: 410). The posthumous influence of Aristotle -was wider than Plato's. Aquinas, Alighiere Dante (1265-1321) and the entire Christian tradition during the medieval era was inspired by him. Machiavelli used his ideas on mixed constitutions to analyze instability. James Harrington (1611-1677) was influenced by his economic analysis of politics. The sociological dimensions of his thought were taken up by Charles-Louis Secondat Montesquieu (1689-1755). Hegel, Marx, and in recent years the Communitarians like MacIntyre drew their conceptions of an

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integrated ethical community largely from the vision of Aristotle, seeing society as a whole and prior to the individual. However, the , totalitarian implications within Marxism-Leninism had nothing to do with Aristotle's ideal.

- Aristotle "bequeathed a great legacy to political thought, but not to any one school". It is for his range, depth and profundity that intellectuals throughout the world continue to pay well-deserved homage to Aristotle as "the master to those who know". He was a great pioneer in political science, and no discussion is ever complete without a reference to his brilliant insights and methods of analysis.

4.5 Key-Words

1. Metabolê : Revolution
2. Nomos : Convention
3. Phersis : Nature
4. Phronesis : Practical wisdom
5. Eudaimôn : Happiness
6. Politeia : Constitution

4.6 Review Questions

1. Briefly explain Aristotle's philosophy.
2. Discuss Aristotle's classification of state.
3. Analyse Aristotle's theory of revolution.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) 2. (*ii*) 3. (*ii*) 4. (*i*)

4.7 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Unit 5: Niccolo Machiavelli

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss Machiavelli's Political Theory.
- Explain the Science of Statecraft.
- Understand Separation of Ethics from Politics.

Introduction

Themes and ideas during Machiavelli's time, society was much different than it had been for previous philosophers. Instead of storing up good works, so as to enjoy paradise, as the medieval man did, the Renaissance man was interested in all things, enjoyed life, strove for worldly acclaim and wealth, and had a deep interest in classical civilizations. He was born at a time of conflict within Florence, Italy, between the republican leaders and the family of the Medici's, of which the Machiavelli's, especially, had a history of opposition towards. After years of conflict between powers, Machiavelli was exiled from his country. It was during this exile that he wrote his most famous work, The Prince, a piece about political power. Growing up, and through his time in political office, Machiavelli studied the men and/or groups in power, specifically noting their successes and failures. Using this information from his observations, Machiavelli wrote The Prince in order to try to re-enter politics by "assisting" the man whom had exiled him, Lorenzo de Medici, in his ruling. Though this was more of a plot to try to gain the favour of Lorenzo, he does note in his book that in order to gain the favour of a prince, you must present him with a gift; that was the purpose of his novel. In it, Machiavelli analysis's the various types of monarchies, analysis's of the different types of states, how they may be obtained, and how they should be ruled. He also describes how power is seized and retained, how to rule the military forces and, the essence of his work, how a prince should act in all circumstances in order to accomplish these tasks.

5.1 Life Sketch

Machiavelli was born in Florence, Italy on May 3, 1469. He was the third child in a family that was neither rich nor aristocratic, but well-connected with the city's famed humanistic circles. The year Machiavelli was born was the one when Lorenzo de Medici (1449–1492), referred to as "Lorenzo

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the Magnificent", the "most Florentine of Florentines", became the uncrowned ruler of the principality. Florence was economically prosperous, but suffered a long period of civil strife and political disorder.

Machiavelli loved Florence, his birthplace. Very little was known of Machiavelli's early life. His father Bernado, a civil lawyer, held several important public appointments. Besides his legal practice, Bernado also received rents from his land, making his family financially comfortable. Bernado took considerable interest in the education of his son. Niccolo was well-versed in Latin, but not Greek and Cicero's humanistic studies, which focused on different moral situations with advice on how to tread a virtuous path. Humanistic studies, which thrived in Florence, valued the willing subordination of one's private interests for public good, the desire to fight against tyranny and corruption, and the need to perform noble acts in order to attain glory. Machiavelli's writings reflected these humanistic concerns.

In 1498, an effective republic was established in Florence. In the same year, Machiavelli, after having completed his education at the University of Florence, joined the Florentine diplomatic service. At the age of 29, he became the secretary to the second chancery with responsibilities in foreign affairs—diplomatic, administrative and military in nature—giving him insights into the actual working of politics. His humanistic training made him a hardworking, patriotic and scrupulously honest public functionary.

Did u know? The Medici rule, which ended in 1494, was followed by that of Girolamo Maria Francois Matteo Savonarola (1452–1498), a monk.

Machiavelli had tremendous faith in history, out of the conviction that the study of history was of crucial significance for an understanding of the contemporary reality. His interest in books was confined only to those that dealt with life's experiences. He spent his evenings wearing fine clothes and reading good books and the classics in his library after returning from work. He felt that he was holding a dialogue with the best minds of the past, and remarked that as he entered the antique courts of the ancients, he felt welcomed by them. Many Renaissance thinkers had their own private libraries or study rooms which they could afford, since Renaissance Italy was extremely rich. The Renaissance was possible because of wealth, as culture flourished only with affluence.

Machiavelli's stint at the chancery gave him an opportunity to meet the influential statesmen of his day, namely Julius II (1443–1513) one of the most dynamic Renaissance Popes, Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) of Germany, King Louis XII of France and Cardinal Cesare Borgia (1476–1507), the illegitimate son of the Rodrigo Borgia Pope Alexander VI (1431–1503). Among them, it was Borgia who left a lasting impression and was quoted in the *Prince* for his ruthless and daring leadership, and as an example for the fascinating account of the role of fortune. Machiavelli's doctrine of fortune conceded that even after planning and playing the game of politics with meticulousness, courage and cunning, one could still be unsuccessful. Machiavelli's judgement on the rulers and statesmen of his time was by and large critical.

In July 1500, Machiavelli visited the court of Louis XII on a diplomatic assignment for six months, only to realize that his home state of Florence was held in low esteem because of the lack of an army, a vacillating republican form of government, and rule by merchants who did not want to spend money on the city's military. Machiavelli himself was referred to as *Ser Nihilo*, meaning Mr Nothing. His experience, which formed the core of the *Prince*, taught him the need for being clever, thrifty, cultured, forceful, decisive and ruthless in politics, if one had to succeed. He also realized the importance of a citizen army and a republican government as important ingredients for the glory and success of a state—themes elaborated in the *Discourses*.

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On returning home, Machiavelli got engrossed with personal matters. During his stay abroad, his sister and father died. He married in 1501. In 1502, he was entrusted with another diplomatic assignment, and the experiences during these four months formed the core of the *Prince* and the *Discourses*. Machiavelli became all the more convinced that a state needed a morality of its own, namely that of success, which he identified as the protection and well-being of the people, and defence and extension of state borders. In 1503, Machiavelli went to Rome to make a report on a crisis in the papal court and assess the new Pope, Julius II.

In 1512, the Republic of Florence collapsed. Machiavelli's career suffered, for he was dismissed from his position on November 7, 1512. Three days later, he was ordered to be confined for one year. In 1513, he was tortured and imprisoned, but subsequently granted amnesty with the ascendancy of the new rulers, the Medici family. As a token of gratitude, he dedicated the *Prince* to the Medici family, Lorenzo II de'Medici (1492–1519), Lorenzo the Magnificient's grandson. After his release, Machiavelli spent his time, one of enforced leisure, reflecting on the lessons from his diplomatic experiences, reading history and understanding statecraft, all of which were incorporated in his writings. Machiavelli read non-philosophical texts extensively: those of Frontininus, Titus Livius Livy (59 BC–17 AD), Plutarch (46–120), Polybius (203–120 BC), Cornelius Tacitus (55–117), Flavius Vegetius (450–383 BC), and Xenophon (430–354 BC).

Task Why did Machiavelli go to Rome in 1503?

The *Prince* explored the causes of the rise and fall of states and the factors for political success. The tract was not officially published until 1532. Its success was immediate, running into 25 editions after Machiavelli's death. More creative pursuits followed, and a play, *Mandragola*, regarded as one of the best comedies of its time, explored the ideas of immorality, intrigue, duplicity, stratagems and the relationship between ends and means. In 1520, Machiavelli was commissioned by the University of Florence to write a chronicle and the annals of Florence, which was published as the *History of Florence* in 1525. He got a paid job after being without one for a long time. Machiavelli also authored the *Belfagor* and *The Art of War* (1521).

In the *History of Florence*, Machiavelli analyzed and attributed the endemic social conflict and violence in the city state of Florence to a natural class war between the people and the ruling nobility. The cause for instability was the hatred that the poor harboured towards the rich. Interestingly, this was also the reason for civic republicanism. The workers realized the need to protect themselves from government repression and act decisively to secure a better life. This was possible only with the overthrow of the nobility. Marx praised the tract as a masterpiece for its suggestion of a struggle between the haves and have-nots, and that human happiness lay in aligning with the side of the deprived.

Machiavelli would be remembered in history as a diplomat, scholar and a dramatist. In his personal life he was an affectionate person, disloyal husband, a loving father, an eloquent, conversationalist, a generous and trustworthy friend with a great sense of humour. He could laugh at himself as easily as he did at the expense of others. He died on June 22, 1527. The following was the inscription on his tombstone: "No epitaph can match so great a name."

5.2 Renaissance and its Impact

Laski (1936: 31) rightly observes that "The whole of the Renaissance is in Machiavelli. There is its lust for power, its admiration for success, its carelessness of means, its rejection of medieval bonds, its frank paganism, its conviction of national unity makes for national strength. Neither his cynicism nor his praise of craftiness is sufficient to conceal the idealist in him".

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To comprehend the full importance of Machiavelli's writings and their context, it is important to understand the series of cultural, economic, social and political changes that began in the fourteenth century called the Renaissance. Its immediate impact was in Italy, which gradually spread to the rest of Europe by the late fifteenth century. The Renaissance signified a rebirth of the human spirit in the attainment of liberty, self-confidence and optimism. In contradiction to the medieval view, which had envisaged the human being as fallen and depraved in an evil world with the devil at the centre, the Renaissance captured the Greek ideal of the essential goodness of the individual, the beauty and glory of the earth, the joy of existence, the insignificance of the supernatural and the importance of the present, as compared to an irrecoverable past and an uncertain future. This return to a pre-Christian attitude towards humans, God and Nature found expression in all aspects of human endeavour and creativity. Humanism, affirming the dignity and excellence of the human being, became the basis of comprehending the modern world. In contrast to the medieval Christian stress on asceticism, poverty, humility, misery and the worthlessness of the earthly person, Humanism defended the freedom of the human spirit and knowledge. The Renaissance signalled the breakdown of a unified Christian society.

At the centre of the "Renaissance was the emergence of the new human, an ambitious restless individual, motivated by his self-interest, seeking glory and fame. Self-realization and joy, rather than renunciation and asceticism, were seen as the true ends of human existence and education. Self-fulfilment was no longer viewed as being achieved by repressing natural faculties and emotions. Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) in his classic, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) pointed out that it was the conception of the new human, the individual motivated by fame and glory, self-actualization and happiness, rather than self-denial and religious faith that formed the essence of the Renaissance. The spirit of individualism and the cult of privacy led to the growth of self-assertion and ushered in the idea of the highest development of the individual.

Alongside the development of the modern individual was the beginning of the modern state. The idea of the modern state, omnipotent and omni-competent, was worked out. The prince had to take charge of everything—preservation of public buildings and churches, maintenance of the municipal police, drainage of the marshes, ensuring the supply of corn, levying taxes and convincing the people of their necessity, supporting the sick and destitute, lending support to distinguished intellectuals and scholars on whose verdict rested his fame for the years to come. More than anybody else, it was Machiavelli who could understand the dynamics of this modern state and the modern individual.

Equally important were the end of the clerical monopoly and the replacement of papal supremacy by secular, sovereign, independent states, each with its own national culture, identity and language. The nation state came into existence and its success was determined not by religious or chivalric, but by political criteria. Explorations and voyages led to geographical discoveries, altering the perceptions regarding the world. The medievalists had viewed the universe with a flat earth at the centre, hell beneath it and heaven as its canopy. The discoveries of Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) and Vasco da Gama (1469–1524) enlarged the geographical horizons beyond the Mediterranean basin and Europe. A new world map magnified the view of the educated.

New geographical discoveries opened up new vistas of trade and religion. This led to growth in commerce and economic development as the basis of modern capitalism. Cities and urban centres emerged. Rational methods of book keeping and accounting and complex banking operations mushroomed, eroding the taboo on moneymaking, entrepreneurship and the profit motive. Education, science and humanism ended clerical monopoly, relegating religion to the private space. The invention of printing, the establishment of libraries and universities increased and spread literacy, and revived an interest in Latin classics.

In Europe, it was Italy that experienced the onslaughts of these new commercial, entrepreneurial and economic forces. All these reflected in the political and societal organization of Italy. Politically,

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Italy was divided into a number of small principalities and five large states: Milan, Venice, Florence, the Papal Domain and Naples. Of these, Florence was the most cultured city, the seat of the Italian Renaissance, producing some eminent and renowned figures. It was the first modern state in the world.

Though culturally vibrant and creative, Italy remained politically divided, weak, and a prey to the imperial ambitions of the French, German and Spanish. Most of the Italian states were ruled by an oligarchy or an individual tyrant. All of them were unable or unwilling to unite the entire peninsula. The Florentine Republic reflected severe factional conflicts and institutional breakdown. It was a period of heated constitutional experimentation, accelerated by Savonarola who expelled the Medici and destroyed their wonders and wealth.

Italians could not reconcile to the fact that an age of heightened cultural creativity and scientific discoveries coincided with loss of political liberty, leading to foreign domination. Italian society, "intellectually brilliant and artistically creative, more emancipated than many in Europe ... was a prey to the worst political corruption and moral degradation". It produced some great minds and intellects of that period, like Alexander Botticelli (1444–1510), Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Buonarroti Michelangelo (1475–1564) and Santi Raphael (1483–1520). Its galaxy of artists made Renaissance Italy comparable to Athens of the fifth century BC. However, while Athens flourished politically, with a vibrant participatory democracy, in Italy there was a political vacuum. The old, feudal order had begun to collapse and disintegrate, but the new age, marked by the emergence of the territorial nation state as a sovereign legal-political entity was still in its embryonic form.

Writing at a time of political chaos and moral confusion, Italian unification became the chief objective for Machiavelli, who could see "clearly the direction that political evolution was taking throughout Europe. No man knew better than he the archaism of the institutions that were being displaced or accepted more readily the part that naked force was playing in the process. Yet no one in that age appreciated more highly the inchoate sense of national unity on which this force was obscurely based". Machiavelli's attachment was to his country Italy, and not to a state as an abstract entity. He desired to redeem Italy from servitude and misery. Like Dante, he dreamt of a united, regenerated and glorious Italy. In order to achieve this, any means were justified, for the purpose was the defence and preservation of the state and its people. Considerations of justice or injustice, humanity or cruelty, glory or shame were immaterial in light of protecting the life and liberty of the country.

Freedom of the country and the common good remained the core themes of Machiavelli's writings. A perfect state was one which promoted the common good, namely the observance of laws, honouring women, keeping public offices open to all citizens on grounds of virtue, maintaining a moderate degree of social equality, and protecting industry, wealth and property. The freedom of a country had to be safeguarded with the help of war and expansion. War was a horror, but not worse than military defeat and subjugation. Machiavelli was the precursor of Hegel in making a realistic appraisal of war in understanding reality.

5.3 Machiavelli's Political Theory

Machiavelli saw stable political authority and order as necessary for social cohesion and moral regeneration. It was for this reason that he stressed the need for a unified polity, and a republican and free government committed to the liberty of its people. His new way of looking at political behaviour was significantly influenced by Leonardo, a personal friend with whose writings he was familiar. Incidentally, Leonardo was an architect of Borgia, the hero of the *Prince*. Machiavelli understood the realities of politics, "its lust for power, its admiration of success, its carefreeness of means, its rejection of medieval bonds, its frank pragmatism, its conviction that national unity makes for national strength. Neither his cynicism nor his praise of craftiness is sufficient to conceal the idealist in him". He cherished republican liberty, but was aware of the danger tyranny posed,

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amidst chaos to free institutions. While in the *Prince* Machiavelli highlighted the importance of the security and unity of the state as the primary concerns of a ruler, in the *Discourses* the theme was liberty and republicanism.

Human Nature

The individual, according to Machiavelli, was wicked, selfish and egoistic. He was fundamentally weak, ungrateful, exhibitionist, artificial, anxious to avoid danger and excessively desirous of gain. Lacking in honesty and justice, he was ready to act in a manner that was detrimental to the community. It was only under compulsion or when there was personal gain that an individual was ready to do good. Being essentially antisocial, anarchical, selfish, greedy and sensual, the individual would readily forgive the murder of his father, but never the seizure of property. He was grateful to the extent of expecting benefits and rewards. The individual was generally timid, averse to new ideas and compliants. He desired power, glory and material well-being. Elsewhere, Machiavelli observed that the desires for novelty, fear and love dictated human actions. Individuals establish a government with the strongest and the most courageous becoming lawgivers and leaders as they desire personal safety and security of possessions. Like Aristotle, he believed that the government made the individual just and fair.

Machiavelli conceived human beings as being basically restless, ambitious, aggressive and acquisitive, in a state of constant strife and anarchy. They were discontented and dissatisfied, for human needs were unlimited, but fortune limited their possessions and capacity for enjoyment. Under such circumstances, politics got "plagued by the dilemma of limited goods and limitless ambition". By making scarcity the focal point of his enquiry and political theorizing, Machiavelli "helped to launch the redefinition of the political association, a redefinition which by starting with the legitimacy of conflict of interests, would end by doubting that such an association could afford to pursue final solutions in the handling of conflicts".

Interestingly, Machiavelli presumed that human nature remained constant, for history moved in a cyclical way, alternating between growth and decay. This enabled one to discern general laws of political behaviour with a view to maximizing one's gain. He observed that there was not much difference between how individuals lived and how they *ought* to live, for the one who sacrificed what had to be done in favour of what ought to be done normally sowed the seeds of destruction rather than preservation.

Furthermore, Machiavelli pointed out that the human mind tended to glorify the past, decry the present and hope for a better future. Like Aristotle, Machiavelli characterized the individual as a political animal. While Aristotle implied the innate sociability of the human being, Machiavelli referred to the individual's love for power, reputation, keenness to establish superiority over others, and the innate desire to control and dominate others. However, Machiavelli confined these traits to the elite. He did not, like Nietzsche, deprecate the abilities of the non-elite, nor did he, like Hobbes, see the desire for power and domination as a universal aspiration.

Machiavelli recognized the importance of order provided by a stable, lawful political community consisting of public-spirited and virtuous citizens. Such an arrangement fulfilled the human need of being admired, respected and remembered. A ruler who preserved the state without undermining or flouting laws or inflicting harm attained fame and respect. On the contrary, the absence of civic *virtu* led to moral degradation and corruption.

Analysis of Corruption and Civic Virtu

Anticipating Rousseau that civilization meant corruption, Machiavelli observed that it would be possible to achieve mammoth tasks among people who were simple and pure, rather than those living in cities, for they were bad and conniving. Normally, a republic, established when individuals were good, had a greater chance of surviving than that which was founded when individuals were mean and crafty.

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Unlike Rousseau, Machiavelli made moral degradation and civic corruption the starting point of his analysis, and looked into factors that fostered public spirit overriding private interests. He saw a definite link between political psychology and political institutions. In the third *Discourses*, Machiavelli declared wealth without worth as a cause of corruption. He extolled the virtue of poverty over wealth, for simplicity of lifestyle brought honour to cities. He saw a nexus between luxurious habits and moral decline. Lack of martial spirit also led to the downfall of civic liberties. If princes and rulers were to be free from corruption, they would have to enact laws that promoted common political liberties rather than their self-interest.

Corruption, to Machiavelli, meant licence, violence, great inequities in wealth and power, lack of peace and justice, disorderly ambition and growth, lawlessness, dishonesty and contempt for religion. It meant the subordination of public values to the private sphere or/and when the public sphere was used for furthering private aims and interests. Usually, societies that were corrupt excluded the common people from playing an active role in government and political life. Machiavelli buttressed this claim by citing two instances of institutional developments that proved to be fatal to liberty within the Roman republic. The first was extending the period of various magistrates holding office. This eventually made Rome servile, and deprived its citizens of their lawful authority. The second was the prolongation of military command, for an increase in the power of the commanders led to the eventual downfall of the republic.

Corruption could be tackled only with extraordinary measures, like rule by a strong prince with overwhelming powers. Machiavelli was convinced that a corrupt people could not achieve nor maintain free politics, for they would be unable to distinguish between subjective private interests and the public domain. They lacked the inner strength to prevent those in power from advancing their private interests, as they themselves, if given the opportunity, would use the political sphere for the pursuit of their private interests (Shumer 1979: 8 – 9). They would appropriate the state for them-selves.

Machiavelli believed that a measure of public virtue as a common ideal and goal for the entire polity, faith in the system and in persons whom the people trusted were fundamental prerequisites for not only ending corruption, but also in making a beginning of the real development of the individual. Civic *virtu* in a ruler were martial qualities needed to defend the state against external aggression and internal disunity. In an ordinary individual, it meant public-spiritedness and patriotism necessary for ensuring freedom and deterring tyranny.

Attitude to Religion

The novelty in Machiavelli's writings was his attitude towards religion and morality, which distinguished him from all those who preceded him. He was scathing in his attack on the Church and its clergy for their failure to provide moral inspiration. He wrote:

> We Italians then owe to the Church of Rome and to her priests our having become irreligious and bad; but we owe her a still greater debt and one that will be the cause of our ruin, namely, that the Church has kept and still keeps our country divided.

Machiavelli was anti-Church and anti-clergy, but not anti-religion. He considered religion as necessary not only for man's social life, but also for the health and prosperity of the state. It was important within a state because of the influence it wielded over political life in general. Though an indispensable part of civic life, it was never an end in itself. As a political tool, princes and rulers were to use religion in their power struggles effectively, but responsibly and cautiously, otherwise it could be disastrous.

Religion was good only if it produced order, for peace brought forth fortune and success.

Machiavelli's attitude towards religion was strictly utilitarian. It was a social force and did not have any spiritual connotation. As a social force, it played a pivotal role because it appealed to the selfishness of man through its doctrine of rewards and punishment, thereby inducing proper

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behaviour and good conduct that was necessary for the well-being of a society. Religion determined the social and ethical norms and values that governed human conduct and actions. Machiavelli had no interest in philosophic contemplation as the highest form of human life, nor was he interested in what constituted good life. He was, however, very seriously concerned with the display of high moral standards and qualities in public life. The distinction that Machiavelli made between the private and public conceptions of morality was among his important contributions.

Machiavelli was categorical that public spirit was crucial to the stability of the state. One of the key determinants of public spirit was religion, and the other, liberty. He advised the prince to do anything and everything possible to cultivate belief in religion, even if the ruler in his personal capacity was irreligious or had very little faith in religion. He was the first to look upon religion as a coercive force, thereby anticipating Rousseau, Burke and Marx.

Machiavelli's vision was dominated by classical ideas, especially with regard to his key idea, *virtu*, by which he meant masculine and warlike qualities. He admired qualities like courage, self-assertiveness, fortitude, ambition, vitality, intelligence, fame, and strength, which religion should ideally foster. By his own preference, he criticized Christianity, for it made men effeminate, charitable and weak, glorifying qualities like renunciation, humility, lowliness, other-worldliness, asceticism, charity, and patience under injustice. A civic religion for Machiavelli should instil fear and respect for authority and help in the inculcation of military valour.

Machiavelli distinguished between pagan and Christian morality, and chose paganism. He did not condemn Christian morality, nor did he try to redefine the Christian conception of a good person. He dismissed the Christian view that an individual was endowed with a divine element and a supernatural end. He also rejected the idea of absolute good. He observed:

> Goodness is simply that which subserves on the average or in the long run, the interests of the mass of individuals. The terms good and evil have no transcendental reference; they refer to the community considered as an association of individual and to nothing else. At bottom apparently, they refer only to the universal desire for security.

Machiavelli contended that original Christianity taught virtues that linked internal good of the soul with the generation and training of civic virtu. Gilbert found nothing in Machiavelli that was anti-Christianity. In fact, many sentiments in the *Discourses* were Christian, for example the condemnation of luxury. Berlin linked Machiavelli to the pagan and Christian traditions. He set aside Croce's view of Machiavelli as an early liberal moralist, unhappy at the fact that politics and ethics did not go together and a general condemnation if one acted politically. Berlin noted that Machiavelli chose pagan morality that focused on public life, social existence and institutional requirements, while Christian morality was inward looking, individualistic and concerned with the need to tend one's soul. In spite of preferring paganism, Machiavelli did not despise Christian values. Moreover, Machiavelli, according to Berlin, taught us unintentionally the irreconciliability of ultimate values, the impossibility of rationally proving that one set of values was superior to the other.

Though Machiavelli was critical of Christianity, he retained the basic Christian views on the differences between good and evil. For instance, he regarded murdering one's co-citizens, betraying one's friends, disloyalty and irreligiousness as lack of *virtu* not entitled to glory. Machiavelli was clear that Italy needed a religion similar to one that ancient Rome had, a religion that taught to serve the interests of the state. He was categorical that Florentines needed political and military virtues which Christian faith did not impart. His reason for writing *The Art of War* was to teach his fellow citizens the importance of training in arms.

> Machiavelli's conception of civic virtu marked an important stage in the development of modern political thought and practice, for it symbolized an end to the old alliance between statecraft and soul-craft. Hence it would be increasingly taken for granted

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> that while the cultivation of souls and personalities might be the proper end of man, it did not provide the focus of political action. This can be stated more strongly by saying that the new science was not conceived as the means to human perfectibility.

Double Standards of Morality

For Machiavelli, a successful ruler or state was one which would be able to acquire, maintain, consolidate and increase power. The survival and the preservation of the commonwealth was his fundamental concern. He prudently calculated the likely consequences of political actions that would achieve national safety. A state and a ruler had to be judged by an independent criterion, the morality of success, which was protection of citizens guaranteeing their well-being, expansion of territory and a zealous safeguarding of national interests. Politics was ultimately and finally a constant struggle for power and domination, which had to be judged by its own rules and norms so that states survived. Machiavelli pointed out that in writing about the rules of politics he was projecting the real truth and not leaving anything to imagination. Commenting on the gulf between *ought* and *is*, Machiavelli observed that

> ... the fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must learn how not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or that according to need ... . Everyone realises how praiseworthy it is for a prince to honour his word and to be straightforward rather than crafty in his dealing, nonetheless contemporary experience shows that princes who have achieved great things have been those who have given their word lightly, who have known how to trick men with their cunning, and who, in the end, have overcome those abiding by honest principles.

Machiavelli did not condone the use of immoral or wicked ways. To him, the *end* was important, which could be attained by any means. He arrived at this understanding after observing the political game from close quarters in which ends justified the means. He contended that a ruler need not always *adhere* to conventional morality rather he should be *willing* to do so. He also insisted that a private individual would have to display impeccable moral values of the highest order. For Machiavelli, the home and family nurtured these moral values, teaching the individual the virtues of independence, simplicity, purity, loyalty and trust. He emphasized that an individual adhered to these values, whereas a statesman could be flexible as far as the conduct of state affairs was concerned, but not in private dealings.

Machiavelli separated the private from the public sphere of morality. While the state had a morality of its own—the morality of success—the private individual was at all times to display qualities that were in consonance with the highest moral standards. He spoke of the *raison d'etat* of the state. In politics, fair was foul and foul was fair, depending on circumstances and situations. No general rule was valid, for everything became a matter of political expediency. A prince had to be compassionate, humane, loyal, and honest, while simultaneously willing to use force, fraud, deception and treachery. Machiavelli argued that political actions were to conform to high moral standards, namely compassion, good faith, trustworthiness and honesty in times of stability. However, in times of strife, chaos and disorder, principled politics would spell ruin. He asserted that power was anything but divine, and to think that states came into existence by the will of God was absurd. He also rejected the divine rights theory of kings.

Machiavelli's attitude to religion and morality made him highly controversial. Strauss (1958: 5) characterized him as a teacher of evil. Sabine (1973: 320) saw him as being amoral. Unlike Sabine, Pocock (1971: 160) following Pollock (1911: 43) attributed it to his scientific detachment, enabling him to merely list the rules for political success, without being judgemental. The ruler, for Machiavelli, was a technician. In order to master the art of illusion, he had to be a skilful pretender and dissembler with seemingly good qualities. As to whether morality was coextensive of success, Machiavelli observed:

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> I will even venture to say that (the virtues) damage a prince who *possesses them and always observes them*, but if he seems to have them they are useful. I mean that he should seem compassionate, trustworthy, humane, honest and religious, and *actually be so*; but yet he should have his mind so trained that, when it is necessary not to practice these virtues, he can change to the opposite and do it skilfully. It is to be understood that a prince, especially a new prince, cannot observe all the things because of which men are considered good, because he is often obliged, if he wishes to maintain his government, to act contrary to faith, contrary to charity, contrary to humanity, contrary to religion. It is therefore necessary that he have a mind capable of turning in whatever direction the winds of Fortune and the variations of affairs require, and ... that *he should not depart from what is morally right, if he can observe it*, but should know how to adopt what is bad, when he is obliged to.

Unlike traditional political theory, which contended that ethical conduct was desirable for it would bring about moral elevation, Machiavelli was too realistic to overlook the irony of the political situation. In politics, it was not possible to assess the effect of a virtuous or a wicked act, for it would result in the opposite effect. His rejection of traditional ethics and the quest to find an alternative political ethic that was suitable and appropriate, was derived from a firmly-held conviction that history moved with abrupt jerks in a frenzied way. In a fragmented world, politics had to be linked with *necessita*, meaning those factors that compelled individuals to find ingenious solutions. This was possible only if purely political factors were taken into account, excluding others. Machiavelli's attempt to establish the autonomy of politics was tanta-mount to a denial of ethical absolutes:

> Machiavelli broke with classical theory which had approached the problems of political action with questions of how men could develop their moral potentialities through a life devoted to political office. But for Machiavelli the problem became more acute, for the issue no longer involved the statesman's quest for a moral perfection which, by its very moral quality, would benefit the community; it involved instead the political actor which was driven to break the moral law in order to preserve his society.

Machiavelli was aware that civilization and a good society meant high moral standards. But he was realistic enough to accept that a society's moral fabric was made or destroyed by its people. He was not a nihilist or a cynic. His amorality implied that in specific situations, a ruler would have to resort to tactics that were not considered strictly moral. Therefore, Machiavelli talked not only of the *science*, but also of the *art* of politics. Politics was no longer a means to higher goals like justice or truth, but an end in itself. The criterion of a successful state was efficiency and not legitimacy, so his art of politics applied to both legal and illegal states. He took it for granted that states, like individuals, would differ widely in nature. He also highlighted that in times of relatively stable social order, "all moral questions can be raised from within the context of the norms which the community shares; in periods of instability it is these norms themselves which are questioned and tested against the criteria of human desires and needs". According to Femina (2004) Machiavelli founded liberal pluralism, essential to modern governance, that the primary purpose of politics was to resolve the competing claims of diverse interest and values.

Machiavelli separated religion from politics and set the tone for one of the main themes of modern times, namely secularization of thought and life, but the impact was not felt immediately for the next 200 years. Though conscious of the importance of religion as a cementing force in society, he was hostile towards Christianity and looked upon the Roman Catholic Church as the main adversary. He espoused hostility towards religion, considering he was writing in Italy prior to the Reformation. Hence, his

> ... philosophy was both narrowly local and narrowly dated. Had he written in any country except Italy, or had he written in Italy after the beginning of the Reformation, and still more after the beginning of the counter-Reformation in the Roman Church, it is impossible to suppose that he would have treated religion as he did.

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The Reformation was a religious movement that swept Europe in the sixteenth century challenging the authority, doctrine and the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church, giving rise to Lutheranism, Calvinism and the Protestant Churches. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther (1483–1546) posted the Ninety-Five Theses on the church door at Wittenberg, proclaiming that religion was a matter of personal conviction, opposed the splendour that surrounded the papacy and the idea of passive obedience, namely that a Christian should simply obey the constituted authority. John Calvin (1509– 1564) reinforced these with a strict regimen, similar to the one proposed in More's *Utopia* (1516). It was Puritan. Calvin's state was a theocratic dictatorship, but as in the case of Luther, Calvinism contributed "intentionally and uninten-tionally, to personal, economic and political individualism".

Calvin's most important contribution was his acceptance of New Economics, namely the capitalist economic system. He opposed the accumulation of wealth, the self-indulgent and ostentatious display of riches, and usury on the poor, but did not oppose the payment of interest on borrowed capital. Weber attributed the rise of capitalism to the Calvinist Puritan ethic of worldly asceticism, and in particular English Puritanism. Richard Henry Tawney (1880–1962), criticizing Weber's thesis, emphasized more on circumstances and movements—economic and intellectual—for the origins of capitalism. The link between capitalism and the Protestant ethic was not as simple as Weber suggested, although he pointed out that the commercial classes in seventeenth-century England were the possessors of a particular brand of social expediency, which was different from that of the conservative elements. Toynbee pointed out that Calvinism because of its rigorous discipline and individualism, appealed tremendously to the rising bourgeoisie.

The Protestant Reformation led to a counter-Reformation and a cold war between the Catholics and the Protestants. Out of the Renaissance and the Reformation came the scientific revolution that spanned from 1500–1700, and was responsible for the creation of the modern world. It taught people to think differently about the world and the universe. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), Tycho Brahe (1546–1601), Johann Kepler (1571–1630) and Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) were the principal participants. The humiliation and torture of Galileo put an end to the scientific tradition in Italy. The year Galileo died, Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) was born. With that, science moved away from the Mediterranean basin to North Europe.

5.4 Science of Statecraft

Machiavelli's science of statecraft (or maxims to the ruler) developed out of his ministerial correspondence, study of history and its lessons, the wisdom of the ancient and from examples of great and noble deeds. He cautioned unwise princes that they would come to grief if they ignored these maxims, for by adhering to them they would be free from their dependence on fortune. He believed that history taught, and to ignore its lessons would be suicidal. He used Livy's history of the Roman republic as a reference point, and instructed them to imitate the conduct of Rome in every aspect.

Importance of History

Machiavelli's attitude to history was practical. History tended to repeat itself, rather than create or generate new things. Change was essentially kaleidoscopic, with no fundamental transformation. Change was cyclical, alternating between growth and decay. He also stressed on the need to read and imitate the lives and fortunes of great men and use them as guides for understanding the present:

> Whoever considers things present and things past will easily understand how the same appetites and humours are and always have been incident to all states and people, so that by diligently examining the course of former ages it is an easy matter for men to foresee what is going to happen in any commonwealth, and not only to

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> provide such remedies against future evils as their predecessors did, but (if there be no precedent) to strike out new ones on the basis of existing analogies. But since considerations of this kind are too often neglected or little understood, or are beyond the knowledge of those men who govern states, it comes to pass that the same evils and inconveniences take place in all ages of history.

Furthermore, he asserted firmly and categorically that:

> Wise men say (perhaps not unjustly) that in order to form an impression of what is yet to come, we ought to consider what is already passed; for there is nothing in this world at present, or at any other time, but has and will have its counterpart in antiquity; which happens because these things are operated by human beings who, having the same passions in all ages, must necessarily behave uniformly in similar situations.

Machiavelli, like the other Renaissance thinkers, could not visualize that civilization could continually and constantly evolve with new ideas and perceptions. Believing in the idea of a closed culture, Greece and Rome remained the reference point that humans were to go back to (Butterfield 1962: 40). They did not have the idea of progress as understood by the thinkers of the French Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.

Republican Politics and Notion of Liberty

Machiavelli distinguished between republics and princedoms, free and unfree states. Free states were those "which are far from all external servitude, and are able to govern themselves according to their own will". A republic was superior to a princedom, which however did not suit all people, except those who were highly public-spirited. Machiavelli's admiration for the ancient Romans was essentially because they had a republican form of government under which they "had achieved unexampled greatness and power". None of its rulers had inherited the throne. He admired the Romans for their zeal for freedom and devotion, patriotism and love for their country, which was possible only under a republican government.

In the opening passage of the *Discourses*, Machiavelli described the growth of freedom in ancient Rome and argued that those who had displayed prudence in constituting a republic had looked upon the safeguarding of liberty as one of the most essential things for which they had to provide. The primary task of a legislator was to enact laws that would guarantee and safeguard liberty. Rome could achieve greatness because of its continual efforts at introducing new institutions that made liberty possible. Machiavelli's adulation of Rome stood in stark contrast to the criticism of Hegel.

The three books of the *Discourses* were devoted to the exploration of the theme of liberty. The first showed how Rome achieved greatness through republican liberty by getting rid of its kings. The second depicted the progressive expansion of Rome as a military power, and its ability to fulfil the liberty of its people. The third spoke about the efforts of particular men in Rome who had contributed to the continuation of political liberty.

Freedom, to Machiavelli, produced not only powerful states but also strong individuals, whose strength was not in dominating or influencing others but in the independence of spirit, in their ability to think and decide for themselves. By liberty, he meant independence from external aggression and internal tyranny, implying the right of people to be able to govern. Freedom was the effective exercise of political rights that was possible among public-spirited and self-respecting individuals. Only a patriotic people could be truly and genuinely free. Conversely, a corrupt people possibly could not maintain liberty. For Machiavelli:

> the justification of law is nothing to do with the protection of individual rights, a concept that makes no appearance in the *Discorsi* at all. The main justification for its exercise is that, by coercing people into acting in such a way as to uphold the institutions of a free state, the law creates and preserves a degree of individual liberty which, in its absence would promptly collapse into absolute servitude.

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For Machiavelli, liberty was threatened by human selfishness. It was threatened when one began to entertain a false notion that personal liberty could be maintained by evading one's civic obligations, or redesigning institutions that maximized their personal gain. By doing so, common good, civic institutions and even personal liberty were subverted.

Machiavelli saw devotion to the public cause as a necessary precondition for claiming and enjoying private freedom without fear or interference. He thought that great leaders could inspire qualities in their people. Other measures for inculcating civic *virtu* were through religion and good laws, for these constituted the guarantees of liberty. Since an individual was good only by necessity, the fear of punishment and the coercive power of law would ensure good behaviour, restraining unruly ambitions. Machiavelli also mentioned the role of a lawgiver, who could enact good laws to regulate people in the same way that hunger and poverty made them industrious. He somehow did not think education could play a role in fostering civic virtues.

Machiavelli saw liberty as being possible within the framework of law. Laws ensured the enjoyment of liberty by all, for they prevented interference and curtailed the corrupt use of wealth. Laws not only protected individuals from a corrupt leader, but also liberated them from following their natural self-destructive tendency, namely the pursuit of self-interest. On a comprehensive scale, Machiavelli recommended the creation of a special magistracy as a guardian of liberty to ensure that liberty was not violated.

Machiavelli did not distinguish between different forms of government, nor did he attempt to classify governments. He did not enquire into the nature of political institutions and practices, though he was convinced that the freedom of an individual could be preserved only in a community of free people who could freely participate in public offices. He regarded all governments as defective, for in any case a good government thrived only for a short time, and bad ones by their nature subverted the state. Like Aristotle, he preferred a mixed constitution, for it was stable and was the best available option. He saw the Roman republic as a good example of a mixed government, for the consuls represented the monarchical principle, the senate the aristocratic, and the *comitia* and tribunes democratic ideas. As a result, common good was promoted at all times, preventing factionalism. A mixed constitution preserved the liberty of a virtuous people and provided stability to the state.

The other way of ensuring that self-interested individuals were willing to risk their lives for the liberty of their community was to make them take an oath binding them to defend the state at all costs. This would make them less frightened, and prevent them from shying away from their duties. If they fought, they might lose their lives, but if they refused, they would have to face the wrath of the gods.

Machiavelli desired the emulation of the Roman example, whereby a state was established for the purpose of aggrandizement, but if it had to succeed and be stable, a high level of public spirit was required. However, he believed that nothing was likely to last long, for everything got corrupted and degenerated, except perhaps the radical selfishness of the individual. He adhered to a cyclical view of history where prosperity led to decay and dissolution, resulting in rebirth. States commenced as monarchies developing into oligarchies, followed by popular governments. A popular government might lead to a monarchy, but the cycle was rarely exhausted. At some point a state might fall prey to external aggression.

Machiavelli did not hope for any real or substantial progress for individuals with insatiable appetites and desires, who remained poor creatures, highly restless and discontented. The unlimited nature of human wants led to constant aggrandizement and domination, which could not be avoided partly because of human discontentment, and partly because conflicts and wars ensured the health of the body politic. Peace, according to Machiavelli, was relaxing and disruptive.

Machiavelli, on the one hand, admired a free, virile and resourceful people, and on the other hand a strong, powerful and successful leader. While on the one hand he admired a republican form of

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government, on the other he prescribed a despotic princedom for reforming a corrupt people and in establishing a state. Therefore, Machiavelli

> patched together, rather precariously, [as] the theories respectively of founding a state and of preserving it after it is founded ... he had one theory for revolutions and another for government.

If a state had to endure and be stable, people's participation, respect for rights, and, in particular, property and adherence to law and customs were very important. Machiavelli was convinced that people's participation through the electoral process would yield a steady supply of leaders. He had immense faith in elections, for people were prudent and wise, with a rare capacity to judge issues. People, in comparison to a prince, made fewer mistakes. Their choice of magistrates was better than those made by the prince. People in general were more stable, trustworthy and grateful, capable of looking to common good and promoting it. He equated the voice of the people with the voice of God. For Machiavelli:

> ... people are more governable than aristocrats who vie with another for power and domination. Since people desire security for their wives and property they can be handled properly if these basic human needs are satisfied. By vesting greater faith in the masses as opposed to heroic leaders Machiavelli showed greater insights into the nature of political mass rather than any other thinker before the nineteenth century.

Machiavelli emerged as a consistent, passionate and devoted champion of people's participation and republican liberty, for he was convinced that a government by people was far better than government by a prince. This created the image of Machiavelli as a scientist or a technician, merely surveying dispassionately the different forms of government and laying down a science of statecraft.

Violence and the Need for Caution

Machiavelli was convinced that the use of violence could be controlled, but could not be altogether eliminated. He recommended the cautious and judicious exercise of despotic violence, for otherwise it would create widespread distrust and hostility towards the government, resulting in instability. He saw violence as a shock therapy to cure corruption and rejuvenate civic *virtu*. Machiavelli:

> ... regarded the science of violence as the means for reducing the amount of suffering in the political condition, but that he was clearly aware of the dangers of entrusting its use to the morally obtuse. What he hoped to further by his economy of violence was the "pure" use of power, undefiled by pride, ambition, or motives of petty revenge ... [he] was aware of the limited efficacy of force and who devoted himself to showing how its technique could be used more efficiently, was far more sensitive to the moral dilemmas of politics and far more committed to the preservation of man than those theorists who, saturated with moral indignation and eager for heroic regeneration, preach purification by the holy flame of violence.

The government ought to use force carefully even in external affairs. While war was inevitable and unavoidable, its consequences could be minimized by discipline, organization and strategy. Machiavelli advised the prince to carefully consider his resources, for a war started for a trivial reason could not be stopped easily. Moreover, if a prince emerged weak after victory, it would mean that he had overestimated his resources. Machiavelli observed that it would be a grave mistake to avoid a war that was necessary, but it would be equally reckless to prolong it or to initiate one that was unnecessary.

Machiavelli exhorted the need to follow the Roman example even with regard to territorial expansion. The aim of imperialism was to preserve the wealth of the subject populations and their native institutions, thus minimizing the costs of devastation to both the conquered and the conqueror. Imperialism would become a mere transfer of power if handled efficiently. Machiavelli

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focused the attention of his readers on the international arena which was more prone to conflicts of interests and forces of ambition and passion than domestic politics. This was because the international arena lacked arbitrating arrangements such as law and institutional procedures, a point reiterated by Hegel.

In the domestic arena, the presence of political institutions, the rule of law and norms of civilized conduct helped in regulating human behaviour, thereby reducing the instances where force and fear would have to be applied. Once again, he stressed the importance of the republican form of government, for people's participation constituted a form of social power, which if dealt with properly, would reduce the use of violence in a society. A republican government was maintained and sustained by the power of its people, rather than by exerting force over them. People's identification and participation in the system would economize the employment of violence, which was why the prince should cultivate and secure people's support. Machiavelli very rightly asserted that only a weak regime would intensify the use of violence and cruelty. If far-reaching changes were brought about consensually, then the human costs would be very minimal.

Advice to the Prince

Machiavelli cautioned the prince against excessive generosity, strictness or kindness, and stressed the need for moderate behaviour. A prince had to be gentle or severe depending on the situation. His relationship with his subjects was similar to the one between a father and his children. A prince had to be strong, and demonstrate his strength whenever necessary. He had to govern his state responsibly and efficiently, ensuring its stability and survival. He had to retain the upper hand and initiative at all times. He had to be held in awe, if not fear. He had to be careful in selecting the methods and means by which he ruled. He had to uphold conventional standards of morality and notions of right by preserving the foundations of religion.

The prince had to abstain from the property and women of his subjects, for these matters, if violated, affected men's sensibilities, driving them to the point of resistance. A prince had to select his officers and advisers carefully, should not hesitate to purge those who had been disloyal. The ruler had to constantly try and expand the state's territory and play the balance of power game skilfully by appearing to be the defender of weaker states. Machiavelli advised the prince to adopt a policy of coalition rather than remain isolated, for neutrality was impossible both domestically and internationally. It would be better to support one side and wage an honest war; otherwise one became prey to the victor or got isolated in a later crisis. The best thing to do was to join a weak rather than a strong state, for in case of a common victory the gains would be marginal, but the losses would be low in case of a common defeat.

Machiavelli insisted on the need for legal remedies against official abuses in order to prevent illegal violence. A prince, in order to succeed, had to be willing to act ruthlessly, combining the valour and courage of a lion with the cunning and shrewdness of a fox. This was because a lion could ward off wolves and a fox could recognize traps. A ruler had to be courageous to fight his enemies, and cunning enough to detect conspiracies. He could do this only if he could change his colours like a chameleon, for in a corrupt age greatness could be achieved only by immoral means. A prince had to know to fight with the help of laws and force. While laws were for civilized persons, force was for the brutes. Both represented two different styles of fighting and could be combined, if necessary, to achieve effective results. Force was necessary since the individual was wretched and dishonourable.

Furthermore, Machiavelli pointed out that princes ought to exterminate the families of the rulers whose territories they wished to possess securely. Opponents ought to be murdered otherwise they could plan their revenge. True liberality consisted in being stingy with one's own property but generous with that of others, a prudent use of virtue and vice in order to be happy, conferring benefits little by little so that they would be appreciated more strongly, never to leave a defeated

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foe wounded, for there would be a sure retaliation, and causing sufficient injury so that they would hurt less and last for a short time. Machiavelli also advised the prince to imitate great figures from the past, and cited the examples of Alexander the Great, Achilles, Caesar, and Scipio Cyrus. He repeatedly referred to Moses, Cyrus, Romulus and Thesus as princes who attained their positions through their own arms and ability, and so worthy of imitation.

Role of the Lawgiver

Machiavelli attached great importance to the role of the lawgiver, in the conviction that laws contributed to civic virtues, ensuring the health of the body politic. A lawgiver was needed to reform a corrupt society, establish a successful state and shape the national character of a people by giving them suitable laws and government. Machiavelli described the lawgiver as an architect not only of the state, but also of society, with its economic and religious institutions, and moral norms, for the lawgiver could tear down old states, establish new ones, change governments and laws, and transform people's natures and qualities. The lawgiver had to satisfy the ambition of the elite and that of the lower classes while restraining both at the same time, channelize the intellectual power of the few and the physical power of the many into the service of the power and glory of the state, from which both derived enjoyment. Though the lawgiver was omnipotent, Machiavelli did not develop "a general theory of political absolutism as Hobbes did later".

Unlike Rousseau, who assumed essential goodness in human beings and that it was society which corrupted them, Machiavelli saw human nature as basically evil and wicked and hence instructed the lawgiver to take cognizance of this fact. The lawgiver would have to balance the ambition of one class and group with that of the other in order to establish a society of lasting good. Rousseau's lawgiver, on the other hand, created the conditions for individuals to realize their true potential and become truly human and intelligent.

Nature of the State

Machiavelli's state was a secular entity, with no relation to the church. It was morally isolated, with no obligation to anything outside itself. It was independent and all its relations were accidental. A state was necessary, for it existed to fulfil the desire for security of person and property. Machiavelli defined the state as an organized force for the maintenance and security of possessions. A state had to try and argument territory and power for itself. It either expanded or perished. It had to look upon its neighbours as actual or potential enemies.

A well-ordered and stable state could be successful if it had a strong government at the centre, an integrated public authority recognized by all, and a citizen army. Machiavelli saw good laws, religion and a citizen army as the support structures for a stable and strong state. There could be no good laws without good arms, and if there were good arms, good laws inevitably followed. An army should consist of its own citizens between the ages of 17 and 40, physically well-trained in arms and military skills, and psychologically prepared to fight a battle if necessary. A citizen who was unwilling to defend his state lacked civic *virtu*. It was the duty of a ruler to create and maintain an efficient, well-disciplined, well-equipped and loyal citizen army. A state with a citizen army would be able to ward off potential threats from its neighbours and other ambitious states, and also defend itself against civil strife and internal dissensions. Machiavelli repeatedly stressed the fact that a state had to be in a position to fight for preserving its independence and liberty, and for this a citizen army— and not mercenaries—was a basic requirement.

Machiavelli cautioned the ruler from using troops of other states, for they would not only exhaust the treasury, but also invariably fail at crucial times. He also rejected the use of mercenaries, after seeing Vitelli and his men fail the Florentines in 1499 while trying to capture Pisa as an outlet to the sea for trading purposes. Mercenaries owed no loyalty and would switch their allegiance on a larger offer of money. Moreover, unlike a citizen army, mercenaries did not fight for a cause on behalf of a state.

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Machiavelli was equally hostile to hereditary monarchy and feudal nobility (besides mercenaries), and the established Church and its clergy, perceiving these to be enemies of a good and stable social and political order. He was critical of the gangsterism of the aristocracy, for they looted and impoverished ordinary people. They could be restrained with the help of an all powerful non-hereditary monarchy which would restrain individual ambitions and prevent the corruption of powerful private citizens—usually the cause of decay within the body politic. In order to achieve this, Machiavelli even suggested the need to use massive violence and political interventionism.

Despite the dynastic ambitions of Italian princes, and the continuing strength of the hereditary principle in Renaissance statecraft, Machiavelli's *Discourses* are filled with contempt for hereditary princes and are pro-foundly anti-aristocracy.

Machiavelli's ideal was a republic. The nobles were tyrannical and anti-liberty. A well-ordered state had to ensure that the rich did not buy their offices with money. It would have to give opportunities to the best and the deserving. Such a state would attain glory, stability and success. He identified the state with government or with its personal head. In the Prince:

> ... all his attention was riveted on the human figure of the man who held the reins of government and so epitomized in his person the whole of public life. Such a conception, determined directly by the historical experience which Machiavelli possessed in such outstanding measure and presupposing a sustained effort on the part of the central government, was essential to the success and pre-eminence of the doctrine. This was a turning point in the history of the Christian world. The minds of political theorists were no longer trammelled by Catholic dogma. The structure of the State was not yet threatened in other directions by any revolt of the individual conscience ... . It was an era in which Unitarian States were being created amid the ruins of the social and political order of the Middle Ages, an era in which it was necessary to place all the weapons of resistance in the hands of those who had still to combat the forces of feudalism and particularism.
>
> It was, in short, an era in which it was essential that the freedom and grandeur of political action and the strength and authority of central government should be clearly affirmed.

Machiavelli, in his analysis of the characteristics and dynamics of the modern nation state, understood the strength that was derived from possessing a common language and customs. In fact, he pointed out that newly acquired territories could be effectively retained provided they shared one language, similar traditions and were not used to liberty for a long period, for otherwise subjugation would be difficult.

Machiavelli was against the use of violence for private reasons other than the *raison d'etat* of the state. He condemned the petty, small-minded and badly executed acts of violence so widely prevalent in Florence. He forbade the violence of a tyrant who captured power for personal reasons and wiped out persons of *virtu* in order to rule alone and notoriously. He praised the great, glorious violence that a republic used in its conquests and expansion.

It was somewhat paradoxical that the realism and cynicism of Machiavelli did not last till the end of the *Prince*. He abruptly departed, and passionately appealed to Medici to raise the standard of Italy against the foreigner. There were no hints of such an appeal till one reached the last chapter, though it might have been there all along, and perhaps that was the reason for writing the book. He had to contend with an Italy which did not respect religion, law and moral obligation. He desired to show to his fellow beings the causes of public misery, of the extreme instability of Italian governments, the destructiveness of factionalism and the general inability to cope with foreign invasion from which Italy suffered. His general purpose was to revive public spirit rather than advocate any particular form of government. He wanted a ruler assisted by an able army to free Italy from the barbarians.

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There was no indication in the book as to whether this-aim would be achieved. But he was convinced that only unification would bring about prosperity and security. He wanted Italy to be like France and Spain. In fact, he admired the French constitution where the king was abound by law and custom and its people were secure and free. The primary thing was independence. Everything else was secondary. In that sense, Machiavelli became a precursor of the nineteenth-century Italian nationalists Cavour, Garibaldi and Mazzini. In spite of his candid realism, he could not resist the temptation of being idealistic, and entertained the possibility of what *ought to be* rather than what *is*. If viewed in this light, then Machiavelli was not completely cynical or nihilistic.

Theory of Change and Fortune as a Woman

Machiavelli's theory of change combined historical and psychological factors. Historical changes occurred due to the role of fortune, which held the key to success. Machiavelli described fortune as a woman to whom *vir* or manliness was attracted. The relationship between *virtu* and dame fortune was addressed in terms of masculine and feminine nature (Pitkin 1984). *Virtu* was to politics what virility was to sex.

According to Machiavelli, fortune favoured and befriended the brave. Fortune was compared to a violent river, which when aroused caused havoc by flooding the plains, tearing down trees and buildings, destroying everything that came in its way. Continuing with the allegory of the river, Machiavelli advised the rulers to build floodgates and embankments to contain the raging river within the barricades. Fortune destroyed those who did not sufficiently safeguard their interests. Fortune, being fickle, could be contained only by those who had the capacity to change. Furthermore, Machiavelli suggested that instead of yielding before fortune, one had to act boldly and decisively. Fortune would ruin those who submitted meekly or those who did not protect or adapt themselves. Men conquered fortune by acknowledging its power in order to prevent a stream from becoming a raging torrent:

> ... fortune varying and men remaining,fixed in their ways, they are successful so long as these ways conform to circumstances, but when they are opposed then they are unsuccessful. I certainly think that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, for fortune is a woman, and it is necessary, if you wish to master her, to conquer her by force; and it can be seen that she lets herself be overcome by the bold rather than by those who proceed coldly. And therefore, like a woman, she is always a friend to the young, because they are less cautious, fiercer, and master her with greater audacity.

Machiavelli's discussion of fortune and *virtu* had to be understood in the context of Italian humanism. Fortune was no longer the "inexorable force of providence", but a "capricious power" of irrational happenstance. Through his creative power and assertiveness, man would be able to control and shape his destiny against the flux that fortune unleashed. By doing so, Machiavelli reiterated the view of the humanists that the human predicament had to be seen as a struggle between man's will and fortune's wilfulness, setting aside the Christian perception of fortune as a life force, a divine necessity with very little room for human manoeuvre and free action.

Machiavelli repeatedly advised his prince to follow his maxims and precepts if he wanted to avoid the ruin or the sudden revolutions caused by fortune. He believed it was possible to effect change and bring events under human control by systematic and self-conscious statesmanship, for "he protested against the view that man cannot change events; he complained of those people who allow things to be governed by chance".

To Machiavelli, the right person was needed at a given point in time of history. Elite circulation could either be slow or fast, peaceful or violent, depending on the situation. The psychological factors that supply the motive for change were the ones that Machiavelli considered the qualities of a lion or a fox, an aspect that was refined by Pareto in his analysis of the elite. Machiavelli saw change as never-ending, being a law of history supported by the laws of psychology.

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Machiavelli probed into the causes and effects of social disturbances and in particular conspiracies. He identified: (a) rivalries among the great, namely the rich and the socially superior; and (b) the endemic and natural enmity between the great and the people, or the rich and the poor, as the two main causes for disturbances. After Aristotle, it was Machiavelli who discussed social dissensions and their causes. He was particularly concerned with factional strife, and saw equality of treatment as a possible cure. He categorically asserted that the stability of a government would depend on the satisfaction of the dominant interests within it.

Self-Assessment

Fill in the following:

1. Medici rule was ended in ..... .
2. Among all the dynamic statesmen ..... left a lasting impressions and was quoted in the prince for his ruthless and daring leadership.
3. Leonardo was an architect of ....., the hero of the Prince.
4. Like Aristotle, Machiavelli characterized the individual as a .....
5. The Belfagor was authored by ..... .

5.5 Summary

- Machiavelli's importance was in providing an outlook that accepted both secularization and amoralization of politics. He took politics out of the context of theology, and subordinated moral principles to the necessities of political existence and people's welfare. He had very little interest in non-political matters. Even his interest in spiritual and religious matters was strictly political. His philosophy was public and not private. The absence of religious polemics in Machiavelli led the theorists who followed to confront issues like order and power in strictly political terms:

  The *leitmotiv* of Machiavelli's posthumous life was his great assertion as a thinker, representing his true and essential contribution to the history of human thought, namely, the clear recognition of the autonomy and the necessity of politics "which lies outside the realm of what is morally good or evil". Machiavelli thereby rejected the mediaeval concept of "unity" and became one of the pioneers of the modern spirit.
- Machiavelli was also the first to speak of the *raison d'etat* of the state. He could perceive the forces shaping the modern nation state like nationalism, national security, and territorial integrity, militarism as forces to safeguard and further state interests. His achievement lay in confronting the secular state and scientifically enquiring into its nature and behaviour. His political realism allowed him to remain neutral towards the means that were to be employed for achieving the ends. Political activities were to be analyzed and appreciated keeping in mind whether they would achieve the objectives for which they were intended. Like the Sophists, he "judged actions not as actions, but solely in terms of their consequences". He could foresee the rise of science and capitalism. Some recent interpretations even view him as the earliest exponent of liberalism and pluralism.
- Machiavelli was the first to state and systematically espouse the power view of politics, laying down the foundations of a new science in the same way as Galileo's Dynamics became the basis of the modern science of nature. Machiavelli identified politics as the struggle for the acquisition, maintenance and consolidation of political power, an analysis developed by Hobbes and Harrington in the seventeenth century, Alexander Hamilton (1755–1804) and James Madison (1751–1836) in the eighteenth century, Pareto, Mosca, and Michels in the nineteenth century, and Edward Hallett Carr, Robert Dahl, David Easton, Hans Morgenthau, Morton Kaplan and Harold Lasswell in the twentieth century.

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- By emphasizing the importance of the study of history, Machiavelli established a method that was extremely useful. However, in spite of being a keen observer of history, he presumed that human nature remained permanent and constant, making it possible to deduce principles of political behaviour. However, the reason for such a presumption was because of the fact that he lived in an age of flux, where the political order was transient. The "belief in a timeless human nature with permanent needs" became the yardstick to measure and explain the "transience of political and social orders". In spite of his depiction of the dark side of human nature, he never lost faith in the importance of good society and its role in shaping human beings. He was the first to study extensively the role of corruption in political-life. His writings brought about the central moral dilemmas of political life, for he spoke of unsavoury and unpalatable truths. He rightly observed that in political life, purity of life and goodness of heart mattered little. Success was important, and to be successful, a good person had to learn to be bad without appearing to be so. Glory, liberty and *virtu* constituted the essential ingredients of political success in Machiavelli's lexicon. He lamented the decline of *virtu* in contemporary Italy, which prevented its unification and independence. He condemned an ostentatious and luxurious life, which precluded acts of glory and *virtu*.
- Machiavelli also accepted conflict as permanent and universal, seeing it as natural, unlike his predecessors who viewed social conflict as unnatural and curable by certain kinds of social systems. The basis of social conflict was the permanent struggle between the common man and the powerful and the moneyed, though he did not explain the struggle in economic terms. He understood struggle in terms of war between states for power and domination. Within a state, the cause for domestic instability and strife was the desire among the majority for security of their lives and possessions, while a small number, the oligarchs, sought to dominate and control the masses. From Polybius, Machiavelli realized that conflict was not only widely prevalent, but it could also be transformed into an instrument to promote socially useful ends. The difference in the nature of conflict between a corrupt and a virtuous commonwealth was the degree and quality of conflict, and not the presence or absence of it. In a virtuous commonwealth, conflict was conducted within the confines of the common good, respect for law and authority and with minimum use of violence. Freedom meant tolerating social conflict. Conflict, if well managed and handled by political compromise, became a source of strength and vibrance to the political process.
- To illustrate the difference, Machiavelli used the Roman example, contrasting it with that of Florence. In Rome, conflict between the plebians and patricians was institutionalized within the senate and the popular assemblies with their tribunes without sapping the vitality of the republic or the liberties of the citizens. In contrast, in Florence, with atomization of society and each person becoming an island, religiousness, civic *virtu*, honesty and respect of authority declined. Factionalism and conspiracies were rampant and government became an arena for powerful coteries. Economic inequalities increased, indolence and luxury undermined the social fabric, virtue declined, and greed increased. Enforcement of law became weak and was compromised according to contingencies. So, unless there was a renewal of the civic order and a return to the first principles, even prudent statesmanship would not be able to stem the tide towards degeneration and decay. Machiavelli accepted that change was the way of life and everything, even the best-ordered states like Rome and Sparta, would decline.
- For Machiavelli, a well-ordered state ensured the well-being and security necessary to combat social conflict and the radical selfishness of human nature. The state had no higher end or any divine purpose. It did not have a personality different or superior to those who constituted it. Successful states depended on the presence of a strong military, protection of the life, property, family and honour of every citizen, economic prosperity without promoting individual economic aggrandizement, strict regulation of luxury, good laws and respect for

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authority, recognition of meritorious citizens, and opportunities for the ambitious to rise within the state based on ability. A well-ordered state was also one where the citizens knew for certain the legal consequences of their actions. Hence, Machiavelli proposed a rational legal system that eliminated arbitrariness, guaranteed legal equality, regularized procedures for the redressal of grievances, prohibited retroactive laws, and executed laws efficiently and vigorously.

- Machiavelli also formulated the "West's first general theory of conspiracy". He believed that most political situations were conspiratorial or counter-conspiratorial in nature. In *the Art of War*, he equated conspiracy with military combat, requiring surprise, secrecy, planning, preparedness, flexibility, swiftness, decisiveness in execution, assessment of strengths and weaknesses, and cunning. He also understood political and military leadership as being identical. He founded modern military science, thus influencing those who followed him, from Maurice of Nassau to Clausewitz.
- Machiavelli was one of the exponents of civic republicanism, inspiring subsequent theorists from diverse standpoints like Jean Bodin (1529/30-1596), Hobbes, Harrington, Spinoza, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Burke, Hegel and de Tocqueville. Machiavelli and his contemporary Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540) prescribed institutional and moralistic remedies to secure and protect civic freedoms. A stable republic supported by patriotic citizens, who in turn should place public good over private gain (especially the pursuit of wealth), refrain from factional squabbles, and willingly fight for the defence of their country, guaranteed freedom. Patriotism was sustained by the continual participation of citizens in civic affairs and religion, other than Christianity. The crucial issue for Machiavelli was the possibility of civic *virtu* among a citizenry in a commercial society. He looked upon the Swiss as having honour, but they could not provide the rulers that Europe or Italy needed. The problem that confronted Machiavelli also vexed Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) who accepted civility and cohesion as mutually incompatible. However, the problem was solved with cities providing the first element and the tribes the second. For Khaldun, the Turks, Arabs and Berbers provided an inexhaustible supply of rulers and warriors who would complement the "uncohesive atomized specialist of the productive urbanized and sedentarized world".
- Machiavelli also emphasized the importance of a wise constitutional machinery alongside civic *virtu*, as well as the importance of mixed constitutions as expressed in the writings of Aristotle, Polybius and Aquinas while engaging in a polemic with Guicciardini. The last preferred an Aristotelian, Venetian-Spartan aristocracy. Machiavelli contended that in a mixed government the separate classes would, through the institutions of representation, limit one another's power, thereby ensuring liberty for all. This defence of limited government as a necessary condition for safeguarding liberty started a tradition that continues even today. Machiavelli was also convinced that the rule of law would supersede factional and private interests, and hence he explored a constitution that would uphold anu preserve the rule of law. In his opinion, a constitution with established institutions and procedures would partly prevent usurpation. He also defended distribution of power with accountability which made it possible to impeach any official of the state.
- Machiavelli was a keen and perceptive observer of the systems in the East, and according to him these states contained ingredients which he thought to be crucial. The Eastern central state was not an apex body within a complex pyramid of power. Both in law and otherwise, there was sufficient dispersal of effective authority. As a result, society never got disrupted nor rendered helpless. But the Eastern state had a strong centre, which, if destroyed, would mean its end.
- Gramsci praised the greatness of Machiavelli for separating politics from ethics. Following Croce's description of "Marx as the Machiavelli of the proletariat", Gramsci tried to analyze

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the ramification of the political aspect of Machiavelli's theory by writing *The Modern Prince* which remained incomplete. In the *Prison Notebooks* (1925–1936), there were a number of references to Machiavelli, and Gramsci pointed out that the protagonist of the new prince in modern times could not be an individual hero, but a political party whose objective was to establish a new kind of state.

- Machiavelli distinguished acts of morality and immorality in the conventional sense. Though critical of the Church and Christianity, Machiavelli was born and died a Christian. His attack on the Church was due to his anti-clericalism, rather than being anti-religion. In comparison, paganism of the ancient world seemed preferable.
- The breakthrough of Renaissance political theory lay in Machiavelli's treatment of the legitimacy of regimes and political leaders. Prior to the *Prince* and the *Discourses*, writers treated political regimes dichotomously as pure and corrupt, normative and non-normative, in the original Platonic and Aristotelian senses. Machiavelli, viewing politics as practiced in Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries, legitimized non-normative politics as unavoidable, as survival-related, as part of reality ... . Machiavelli touched the nerve of political science with this "value-free" orientation and his name has become a synonym for moral indifference and political cynicism. The issues raised by this venture into realism are still fluttering the dovecotes of political philosophy.
- Undeservedly, Machiavelli was seen as the devil's agent, confined to permanent infamy for preaching villainy and duplicitous pursuit of political power. It was the price that he paid for making the first attempt to develop a new science of politics and identifying the essential ingredients of modern political theory. It was his good fortune that the greatest political thinker that Italy produced did not meet the same fate as Galileo did.

5.6 Key-Words

1. Anti-clericalism : A historical movement that opposes the clergy for reasons including their actual or alleged power.
2. Political cynicism : Important political sentiments

5.7 Review Questions

1. In what way does Machiavelli's works reflect his times?
2. Enumerate the main features of Machiavelli's thoughts on politics and forms of government.
3. Critically analyse Machiavelli's theory of statecraft.
4. Discuss the theory of separation of ethics from politics

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. 1494
2. Borgia
3. Borgia
4. Political animal
5. Machiavelli

5.8 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Unit 6: Thomas Hobbes

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss Individualism
- Understand Social Contract
- Explain Hobbes' Political Philosophy
- Know the theory of women and the Gender Question.

Introduction

Thomas Hobbes, in some older texts Thomas Hobbs of Malmsbury, was an English philosopher, remembered today for his work on political philosophy. His 1651 book Leviathan established the foundation for most of Western political philosophy from the perspective of social contract theory.

The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) is best known for his political thought, and deservedly so. His vision of the world is strikingly original and still relevant to contemporary politics. His main concern is the problem of social and political order: how human beings can live together in peace and avoid the danger and fear of civil conflict. He poses stark alternatives: we should give our obedience to an unaccountable sovereign (a person or group empowered to decide every social and political issue). Otherwise what awaits us is a "state of nature" that closely resembles civil war-a situation of universal insecurity, where all have reason to fear violent death and where rewarding human cooperation is all but impossible.

Hobbes is the founding father of modern political philosophy. Directly or indirectly, he has set the terms of debate about the fundamentals of political life right into our own times. Few have liked his thesis, that the problems of political life mean that a society should accept an unaccountable sovereign as its sole political authority. Nonetheless, we still live in the world that Hobbes addressed head on: a world where human authority is something that requires justification, and is automatically accepted by few; a world where social and political inequality also appears questionable; and a world where religious authority faces significant dispute. We can put the matter in terms of the concern with equality and rights that Hobbes's thought heralded: we live in

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a world where all human beings are supposed to have rights, that is, moral claims that protect their basic interests. But what or who determines what those rights are? And who will enforce them? In other words, who will exercise the most important political powers, when the basic assumption is that we all share the same entitlements?

6.1 Life Sketch

Hobbes was born on April 5, 1588. He was the second son. His birth was premature. His parents were relatively poor. His father was a member of the clergy near Malmesburg, Wiltshire. He was brought up by his uncle. In his younger days, he was a bright student and mastered a number of languages. His first publication was a translation in English of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* in 1629. Besides, just before he died, at the age of 86, he translated Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* into English. Throughout his life he wrote verses in Latin and English. He was a quick writer of both prose and verse, and the last 10 chapters of the *Leviathan* (approximately 90,000 words) were written in an amazing time-span of less than a year.

Did u know? Thomas Hobbes could speak and read Latin, Greek, French, Italian and English. While he was still a schoolboy, he translated Euripides' *Medea* from Greek into Latin, and throughout his life this continued.

Hobbes learnt scholastic logic and physics at Oxford University. He also spent time reading maps. However, he disliked the education imparted at Oxford, dismissing scholasticism as a collection of absurdities. After completing his education, he was recruited in 1618 into an aristocratic household, the family of William Lord Cavendish, who came to be known as the Earl of Devonshire. At first he was a tutor, and later became a secretary. The rest of his life was spent in the employment of this family or its neighbours and cousins. He accompanied Lord Cavendish's son on a grand tour of Europe in 1610-1615. In 1630, he escorted the son of another family on a four of Europe and in 1634-1635 he took the son of his pupil of 1610 on a journey similar to the one he had taken with his father. These tours gave Hobbes a unique opportunity to meet both politicians and intellectuals, enabling him to gain many new insights. He met eminent people like Galileo Galilee, Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) and Marin Marsenne (1588-1648). He corresponded with Descartes who was in hiding in the Netherlands; finally the two met in 1648. Of all the places that he visited, Venice made the most lasting impression.

For a while during the period of the Civil War in 1641 and the Thirty-Year war (1618-1648), Hobbes had to deal with matters like horses. Interestingly, he also studied details of telescopes, which he felt would give a decisive military advantage to the country that could innovate one. In 1634, he discussed problems of optics and physics and subsequently met various French mathematicians and philosophers. This led to his disassociation with conventional Aristotelian physics.

Task Which publication led Hobbes to his estrangement with Charles II?

By the end of 1640, Hobbes had written two drafts of philosophical works, which included *De Cive* (1642). With a fear of persecution by the Long parliament for his *Elements of Law*, which was a brief for his master and supporters in the debates in parliament, he fled to France in November 1640 and stayed there till the winter of 1651-1652. The publication of the *Leviathan* led

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to his estrangement with Charles II. He returned to England and submitted to the republican government under Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), and received a pension from Charles II (1630-1685). In 1655, *De Corpore* was published. In 1657, the *Leviathan* was reported to the parliamentary committee as "a most poisonous piece of atheism".

But in spite of ill health, his famous work, the *Leviathan*, appeared in April 1651. It was an astonishing method of publication, as Hobbes sent instalments each week from Paris to London for setting in type, with proofs being sent back within a week. The experience of Hobbes to the reaction of his work was terrifying, and in the last part of his life he attempted many books to vindicate himself. In 1688, a revised Latin edition of the *Leviathan* was published. In 1670, the *Behemoth* was published. In 1683, the *Leviathan* and the *De Cive* were condemned and burned at Oxford University.

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In 1647, Hobbes fell seriously ill, and could never recover fully. From 1648, he started developing symptoms which indicated Parkinson's disease.

Hobbes served the Cavendish family faithfully for more than four generations, and in his old age was treated by the family as more than a servant, but less than an honoured guest. In October 1679, he fell ill and finally died of paralysis on 3 December. "He seems in fact to have died much as he had lived, a witty and skeptical humanist". It was said of Hobbes that he worked hard for his longevity. John Aubrey, his biographer and friend, tells of the exercises, walking up and down hills very fast, playing tennis and having rub-downs as measures that Hobbes undertook for keeping fit. Moreover, during the night after everyone had gone to sleep, Hobbes would sing a "prick-song". "Here then is a philosopher with a very unphilosophic aversion to death, an aversion that Hobbes eventually posited as fundamental to human nature and a force for wisdom in human affairs". Hobbes spent his time mediating and philosophizing, writing down his "darting thoughts" in a notebook that he always carried with him. He was a voracious reader, and read anything that he came across. He was conscious of being a self-taught philosopher.

6.2 Developments in Science and their Influence on Hobbes

Philosophically and methodologically, Hobbes was influenced by new developments in the physical sciences and by the works of Bacon, Kepler and Galileo. This was the period not only of religious strife, but also of scientific temperament, for there was immense curiosity about nature and the desire to eschew the supernatural. Both Bacon and Kepler visualized an order behind the diversity in the universe. Galileo laid down the principles of mechanics, observing that the task of a scientist was to discover primitive notions of complex objects in simple ones. He rejected Aristotle, and looked to Plato's *Timaeus* for an understanding of the universe.

Plato was the earliest among philosophers to understand the implications of the Pythagorean formula of "One behind the Many", by the use of mathematics to study Forms or Idea that were behind the world of senses subject to motion and change. However, with Galileo and others, the question was to construct a mathematical theory of motion, rather than of motionless Form. The general tone of the new science tried to despiritualize nature, by abolishing the distinction between animate and inanimate. It clearly identified and established the difference between the inner from the outer worlds. The new science explained the natural world mechanically with reference to simple motions. The inner world was subjective, and the outer world objective. The relationship between the two was contingent. It assumed that thinking was an activity that took place within one's mind, which could be deciphered by none other than the thinking subject. A subject's thoughts could not be understood by his external actions and behaviour.

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Hobbes and Descartes accepted the argument of the Skeptics, and pointed out that it was not possible to have a direct and honest experience of the external world; all that one could comprehend was the internal activity within one's brain. Though Descartes raised this question in his *Discourse on the Method* (1637), it was Hobbes who suggested that for purposes of philosophical enquiry we should presume the existence of a single brain, and then speculate whether such a brain could perceive and experience. Unlike Descartes, he took it for granted that such a mind could be satisfied, that the material world was the only world, and that the universe consisted of nothing but matter in motion or at rest. Its experiences were caused by the motion of these objects, and not because of the presence of God. For Hobbes, spirit was nothing but a movement in certain parts of an organism. Motion was the cause of all things. Thought and physical processes were distinct expressions of the universal category of "motion". He concluded that since matter alone existed, thought must itself be motion. Physical laws could be the basis of human psychology and behaviour.

Following the true spirit of the new science and philosophy, Hobbes adopted the science of geometry to grasp political and moral knowledge. Geometry was useful because of its clear deductive reasoning, for as long as one's premises were correct, one could arrive at the right conclusions. He was captivated by geometry at the age of 40, when he accidentally came across Euclid's *Elements* about which Aubrey wrote:

> He was 40 years old before he looked on Geometry; which happened accidentally. Being in a Gentleman's Library, Euclid's *Elements* lay open, and 'twas the *47. El. libri I*. He read the Proposition. "By G—said he ... this is impossible." So he reads the Demonstration of it, which referred him back to such a Proposition; which proposition he read. That referred him back to another, which he also read. *Et sic deinceps* (and so on) that at least he was demonstratively convinced of that truth. This made him live with Geometry.

At the end of Chapter 31, he emphatically proclaimed that he had attempted what no previous philosopher had done, namely to "put in order, and sufficiently, or probably proved all the Theorems of moral doctrine, that men may learn thereby, both how to govern, and how to obey" (Hobbes 1991: 254). For Hobbes, geometry provided the intellectual method to solve the problems of political life. Therefore, he forwarded the *Leviathan* as an extended proof, proceeding from clear definitions and axioms to conclusions that right-thinking Englishmen would simply have to accept. It was a different matter whether he succeeded in his aim or not, but there was no denying the sheer brilliance of his attempt and fascination it aroused. "For it is probable that what was foremost in Hobbes' mind was the vision, not of a new type of philosophy or science but of a universe that is nothing but bodies and their aimless motions".

Did u know? Hobbes described geometry as the only science which pleased God and was hence bestowed upon humankind. He was convinced that politics could be as precise as geometry, and referred to the *Leviathan* as a *demonstration*.

Hobbes' second intellectual model was physical science, especially the one practised by Galileo, whom he greatly admired. Galileo's technique of investigation was known as the resolutive composite method. The resolutive part of the method consisted in abstracting all extraneous considerations, and concentrating on the essential facts; for example, in analyzing motion, Galileo focused on the essentials like mass, weight and acceleration. Having identified the basic factors, he recomposed these into a simple and theoretical explanation. The same techniques—resolve, idealize, recompose—were Hobbes' method in political science. He resolved the diseased commonwealth of his day into its constituent parts, individuals and their passions in a "state of

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nature". Then he recombined these elements into a new body politic, the Leviathan. Hobbes compared his method to taking apart a watch or a small engine in order to know its constituent parts.

Hobbes contended that the aim of all philosophy was to give a mechanical theory of the universe. This was seen as a problem in geometry. Atoms had no properties of their own, except when seen as a part of certain laws of motion. Matter was in a state of perpetual motion. The problem was how it moved from one state of motion to another. The human being was also an automaton, for all his actions could be explained by the laws of motion. All motions originated, and were with reference to, the human body. It would function harmoniously with minimum friction, like a wrist watch, if arranged properly. If not, then the parts would destroy one another.

Hobbes's *mechanical* materialism differed from Marx's *dialectical* materialism. A mechanical materialist perceived matter to be passive, with change stimulated from the external environment. A dialectical materialist regarded matter as being active, changing from within without much help from the environment. The mechanistic conception implied that the whole was no more than a sum total of the parts that comprised it. The whole was not more important or greater than the constituent parts. Applying the analogy to the state, Hobbes viewed the state as an aggregate and not a compound of individuals.

Thus, the ultimate aim of Hobbes, as of Galileo, was to use the mathematical framework to describe a physical and political phenomenon, as mathematics provided unity, certainty and precision. Following Galileo, he opposed the Aristotelian idea of things moving towards some goal, and then coming to rest. On the contrary, things in motion tended to stay that way. Philosophy, for Hobbes, was strictly utilitarian and practical— a knowledge of the effects which could be produced by a given set of causes, or conversely, of causes that resulted in a set of effects. Like Bacon and Hamilton, he regarded power as the end of knowledge and an instrument to harness the forces of nature. All individuals were equal, but differences arose due to their differing capacity for knowledge. All knew that war and civil strife were the worst possible calamities, but few understood their causes and the ways to avoid them. Very few could comprehend the means by which peace could be maintained.

Hobbes insisted that if science had to gain ascendancy, it would have to receive support from certain sections in society. He emphasized that philosophy and science could only flourish in an affluent society, and cited the examples of Athens and Rome. He cautioned against the pursuit of wealth as an overwhelming goal, for if that happened, it would subordinate knowledge, increase corruption, imperil peace and safety in civil society. England of the seventeenth century was similar to Athens. In both societies, philosophy was no longer pursued for the knowledge and the truth it bestowed, but was seen as a means to earning a living. The political message that he conveyed was that it would be fatal to rely on the advice of those who were more dextrous with making money rather than knowledge.

6.3 Hobbes' Political Philosophy

Hobbes stress was on fear and self-interest as the two fundamental human motivations which needed to be tempered and controlled by an omnipotent sovereign power. The presence of a sovereign separated a state of nature from a political society. Using the device of the social contract, Hobbes explained the nature of sovereignty, its location, the relationship with the individual, the essential functions of a government, and the origins of a state. Hobbes defended a case for absolute legal sovereignty, since sovereign power was the result of a zero-sum game. Absolute power ensured complete order. Conversely, its absence meant chaos.

In view of the fact that the English Parliament succeeded in extracting a Petition of Rights from Charles I, Hobbes warned his readers through his translation of Thucydides (1628) against any

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disaffection with the established government. He also cautioned against democracy and the illusionary benefits of a republic. He deplored the fact that the English political system was not functioning smoothly, and was worried about the consequences of disorder and civil war.

The troubles that Hobbes perceived finally arrived in 1640, lasting for the next 20-odd years. During this period, England experienced a tussle between royal and parliamentary forces, the execution of Charles I in 1649, and a stringent Puritan rule under Cromwell. The era came to an end with the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II. Basically, three different overlapping struggles were involved.

1. Parliament against the king.
2. The Puritans against the established church.
3. The expanding economic forces of the towns, ports and countryside against the ossified, old, royal monopolists and landowners.

This was the period of contending political, religious and economic principles, a time of diverse production and diffusion of social ideas. The seventeenth century witnessed ferment in political and religious thought, bringing in a fundamental ideological shift. Increasingly, the community was seen as an artifact created voluntarily through a contract based on mutual agreement for the fulfilment of individual aims and aspirations. This meant that political authority could be judged, evaluated and changed, for it was bound by a constitution and laws, and no longer absolutist in nature. The constitutional state was emerging as the new political formation and subject of political theorizing. Hobbes was the first to grapple with this new entity.

Hobbes equated intellectual ferment with the disorder and violence unleashed by the civil wars, attributing it to the mischievous doctrines spread by individuals collectively referred to as "the seducers". These corrupting notions were: (*a*) that private citizens could judge the right and the wrong, good and evil; (*b*) it was a sin to act against one's conscience; (*c*) one's conscience might be supernaturally inspired; and (*d*) that the sovereign power must be limited and divided. Hobbes suspected the Puritans and the universities as being the root cause of seditious activity.

The Puritans' offence consisted in letting their consciences be their guide. In Hobbes' day, conscience was termed "inner light", and Hobbes' irritation lay in the fact that "all England seemed to be ablaze with inner lights". He argued that the Protestant stress on the importance of inner conviction made all "outward things" a matter of indifference, for if true belief, as taught by the Protestants, was private, an inward thing, a matter of the quality of one's faith, then it did not matter what the outward forms used for its expression were. However, this sort of individualism would lead to confusion and anarchy. In the *Leviathan*, he made every effort to prove that it was not permissible to follow one's own conscience other than the sovereign commands:

> ... one of the most important factors establishing and maintaining the identity of a political society was a common political language... . the language of politics differed in the crucial respect that the commonness of meanings depended on a ruling power capable of enforcing them; that is, of declaring, for example the precise meaning of a right and punishing those who refused to accept the assertion.

Similarly, Hobbes condemned the universities as centres of sedition and the essential cause of the civil war. He hoped that the *Leviathan* would persuade his readers to act sensibly and prize public order. Order was the overriding concern, just as civil war was the greatest evil. He believed that by bringing order into political thinking, he would have taken a long step towards bringing order into society.

Hobbes conceived of the sources of social dissension in two different ways. In the *Behemoth* (which was sociological in nature), he specified *groups* which had seduced citizens from their obligation to the sovereign—groups such as Presbyterian ministers, Roman Catholics, and the merchants of the trading cities. But in *Elements of Law*, *De Cive* (*The Citizen: Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society*) (1642) and the *Leviathan*, which were analytical and philosophical in nature, he presented individuals, not groups, as the root of social problems.

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6.4 Human Nature

Hobbes, like Machiavelli, was concerned with the secular origins of human conduct, for he did not theorize about proper behaviour from an understanding of the Idea of Good, or from a revelation of divine commands. Contrary to Aristotle and the medieval thinkers, who saw human nature as innately social, Hobbes viewed human beings as isolated, egoistic, self-interested, and seeking society as a means to their ends.

Individuals were creatures of desire, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. Pleasures were good and pain bad, which was why men sought to pursue and maximize their pleasures and avoid pain. The pleasure-pain theory was developed in a coherent and systematic theory of human behaviour and motivation by the Utilitarians, especially Bentham in the eighteenth century. In addition to being creatures of pleasure and pain, Hobbes saw individuals constantly in motion to satisfy their desires. Continual success in the attainment and fulfilment of their desires was called felicity, a condition of movement and not rest. Appetites were insatiable, for the satisfaction of some gave rise to others. Satisfaction therefore was a temporary feeling, for individuals were aware of the recurrence of desires. Not only did individuals ensure the means for present satisfaction, but they also provided for future ones.

Hobbes asserted that every human action, feeling and thought was ultimately physically determined, yet he allowed ample scope for voluntary, self-designed and administrated changes in human conditions. Though the human being was dependent on his life, on the motion of his body, he was able, to some extent, to control these motions and make his life. This he did by "natural" means, i.e. by relying partly on natural passions and partly on reason. It was reason, according to Hobbes, that distinguished humans from animals. He drew a distinction between "prudence", which was the accumulation of experience, and "reason" seen essentially in mathematical terms.

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"When a man *Reasoneth*, he does nothing else but conceive a summe totall, from *Addition* of parcels; or conceive a Remainder, from substraction of one summe from another".

Reason therefore enabled the individual to understand the impressions that sense organs picked up from the external world, and also indicated an awareness of one's natural passions. Hobbes also introduced, interestingly, the need for an "arbitrator" or "judge" who resolved rational disagreements, since no one individual's reason was necessarily "right", so parties to a dispute needed an arbitrator "to whose sentence they will both stand". This remained a major theme in the entire theoretical construct of Hobbes, that order was absolutely necessary and an indispensable precondition for getting anywhere with human reason, of being able to build any sort of culture.

Hobbes did not exclude the possibility of altruism, listing benevolence, goodwill and charity among passions. Good and evil were names that signified an individual's appetite and aversions. The objects of an individual's desires varied in accordance with his personal characteristics, but all—at least ordinarily—desired self-preservation. Peace enhanced the possibilities of preserving ourselves, so it was good.

It was important to note that the need for an arbitrator was not due to lack of sufficient reason. The more compelling factor was the barriers erected between human beings as a result of their natural passions. These passions were directly related to individuals valuing their life above everything else, and sticking to it at all costs. The "appetites" and "aversions" were basically passions. The feeling towards things depended on how conducive they were in ensuring and maintaining life, and was accordingly described as "good" and "bad". The aim of the individual dictated by passion was to obtain desired results.

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Human will, in Hobbes' philosophy, did not imply anything spiritual or transcendental but was related to the natural needs of the body. He mentioned a long list of passions, but the special emphasis was on fear, in particular the fear of death, and on the universal and perfectly justified quest for power. In contrast to classical philosophers, Hobbes did not assign any positive or higher aim to life. There "is no Summum Bonum (Greatest Good) as is spoken of in the Books of the Old Morall Philosophers". Since individuals would like to do their own thing, pursue their own desires, there was no ultimate human good as a criterion of ethical judgement. One could expect, in life, at most only "felicity", which was continual prosperity. "For there is no such thing as perpetual tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because Life itselfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Feare, no more than without Sense".

Hobbes contended that life was nothing but a perpetual and relentless desire and pursuit of power, a prerequisite for felicity. He pointed out that one ought to recognize a "general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire for Power after power that ceaseth only in Death". Consequently, individuals were averse to death, especially accidental death, for it marked the end of attainment of all felicity. Power was sought for it represented a means of acquiring those things that made life worthwhile and contented, called felicity. The fact that all individuals (and not merely the political elite) sought power distinguished Hobbes from Machiavelli.

Another significant facet of Hobbes' perception that set him apart from both ancient and medieval philosophers was his belief in the equality of men, the fact that men were equal in physical power, and faculties of mind. By equality, Hobbes meant equal ability and the equal hope of attaining the ends individuals aspired for. The physically weak may achieve by cunning what the strong could accomplish through force. Hobbes accepted differences in physical or natural endowments. Hobbes also saw human beings as active creatures with a "will". Human beings were endowed with both reason and passions (reason being passive while passions active). Differences in passions created differences in wits, with a desire to excel over others. Since individuals were equal and active, those who succeeded would have more enemies and competitors, and face maximum danger. Hobbes observed that human beings stood nothing to gain from the company of others, except pain. A permanent rivalry existed between human beings for honour, riches and authority, with life as nothing but potential warfare, a war of everyone against the others.

State of Nature

Having described the natural person, Hobbes proceeded to portray the state of nature. In the light of bleak and pessimistic human nature, the picturization of the state of nature was gloomy and sordid. Hobbes saw human relationships as those of mutual suspicion and hostility. The only rule that individuals acknowledged was that one would take if one had the power, and retain as long as one could. In this "ill condition", there was no law, no justice, no notion of right and wrong, with only force and fraud as the two cardinal virtues. Justice and injustice "relate to man in society, not in solitude". Daniel Defoe's (1660-1731) *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) graphically captured the Hobbesian depiction of an atomistic asocial individual. Society was nut natural; in fact, individuals had to be educated in order to live in one. The state of nature prohibited the possibilities of ensuring commodious living or civilized pursuits that made life worthwhile and meaningful, for:

> In such condition, there is no place for Industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving such things as require much force, no Knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of Time, no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short.

The principal cause of conflict was within the nature of man. Competition, diffidence and glory were the three reasons that were responsible for quarrel and rivalry among individuals. "The first maketh men invade for Gain; the second, for Safety; and the third, for Reputation. The first use Violence, to make themselves Masters of other men's persons ... the second to defend them; the third, for trifles ...".

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Hobbes did not attribute the predicament of the natural person to either sin or depravity, but to human nature. The individual was the author of his own ruination. The state of nature degenerated into a state of war, "a war of every man against every man". Such a condition might not exist all over the world, other than in America where the savages lived in a nasty and brutish manner. The state of nature was a condition when political authority failed:

> The state of nature dramatizes what Hobbes takes to be the fundamental dilemma of human existence: that men both need each other and "grieve" each other. Most social life, he tells us, is for gain or for glory, and as we have seen, men pay for these pleasures by a host of small pains and humiliation at each other's hands. Such things are but hints of what would happen did we not live under government. They would very rapidly have impelled men into civil society, so that the state of nature cannot have existed for long, though it is approximated whenever authority breaks down.

Hobbes was not referring to an actual historical process of development of human society. The conditions in which men lived were of their own making. Civil society either controlled or suppressed the natural instincts, but never changed them. Interestingly, Hobbes toned the aggressive view of human nature in *De Cive*. He described the natural state as one of war, which was not responsible for the evil in human nature. In a footnote, he accepted the natural gregariousness of human beings as indicating a desire to come together. Logically, civil societies were not mere meetings, but bonds, that made faith and compacts necessary. For Hobbes, it was the absence of "faith" or trust and not the presence of an evil quality in man that caused human misery in the natural state. The absence of faith was partly due to limited natural reason, and partly due to human inability to decipher the thoughts and motives of others.

Natural Laws

In a state of nature, individuals enjoyed complete liberty, including a natural right to everything, even to one another's bodies. The natural laws, 19 in all, and considered as Articles of Peace, were dictates of reason. These were not "laws" or "commands". Subsequently, Hobbes, like Grotius, argued that the laws of nature were also proper laws, since they were "delivered in the word of God". These laws were counsels of prudence. It prescribes types of civil manners that promote peaceful behaviour.

Natural laws in Hobbes' theory did not mean eternal justice, perfect morality or standards to judge existing laws as the Stoics did. They did not imply the existence of common good, for they merely created the common conditions which were necessary to fulfil each individual good. These laws were immutable. Of the 19, there were three important natural laws: (*a*) seek peace and follow it; (*b*) abandon the natural right to things; and (*c*) that individuals must honour their contracts. Hobbes stressed the fact that peace demanded mutual confidence, for society depended on mutual trust. This led him to conclude that supreme power ought to coincide with supreme authority. Governments had to be always backed by force, if not direct, at least, implicit, for "covenants without swords are but words and of no strength to secure a man at all".

Social Contract

Since the first law of nature enjoined individuals to seek peace, the only way to attain it was through a covenant leading to the establishment of a state. Individuals surrendered all their powers through a contract to a third party who was not a party to the contract, but nevertheless received all the powers that were surrendered. The commonwealth was constituted when the multitude of individuals were united in one person, when every person said to the other, "I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my self, to this Man, or this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner".

In the seventeenth century, the notion of the contract as a free agreement between self-interested individuals became an answer to the problems of social cohesion. The third party was a consequence

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of the contract, an artificial person distinct from the natural individual. It was not the common will of all, for such an idea did not exist but was only a substitute for conflicting individual wills, as that would guarantee unity among multitudes within in a commonwealth. The contract created an artifact in the sovereign authority whereby each individual gave up his right of governing himself, on the condition that others did likewise. The only way to erect the common power:

> ... is, to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will; which is as much to say, to appoint one Man, or Assembly of men, to beare their Person; and everyone to owne, and acknowledge himself to be Author of whatsoever he that so beareth their Person, shall Act or cause to be Acted, in those things which concern the Common Peace and Safety ... .

Each individual, by consenting to a set of rules, guaranteed basic equality with every other member. This also meant that no one possessed more rights than another. The sovereign must treat all the individuals equally in matters of justice and levying taxes. Hobbes defined justice as equality in treatment and equality in rights. It also involved keeping one's promises, for non-performance would lead to an unequal status. Hobbes equated justice with fairness, treating others as one would expect to be treated.

Once the sovereign power was created it would be bestowed with all powers. "This is the Generation of that great Leviathan, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that Mortall God, to which we owe under the Immortall God, our peace and defence".

The contract created civil society and political authority, for it was a social and political contract. It was a contract of each with the other. A commonwealth could be established by two methods: acquisition, and institution. Acquisition was when individuals were threatened into submission. The process of institution was when individuals, of their own impulse, united, agreeing to transfer all their natural powers through a contract to a third party of one, few or many. Both were contractual, though the process of institution exemplified the essence of contractualism. The contract was perpetual and irrevocable. Individuals limited their sovereignty voluntarily by creating a civil society.

Hobbes preferred the beneficiary of the contract, the third person, to be a monarch. Commonwealths differed not due to the nature of the sovereign power, but in the numbers who wielded and exercised this power. Monarchy was preferable to an aristocracy or democracy because of the following reasons:

1. the self-indulgence of one compared to that of many would be cheaper;
2. the existence of an identity of interests between the king and his subjects; and
3. less intrigues and plots, which were normally due to personal ambitions and envy of members of the ruling elite.

Adhering to the Monist view, Hobbes saw the sovereign power as undivided, unlimited, inalienable and permanent. The contract created the state and the government simultaneously. His defence of absolute state power in reality was a justification of absolute government or monarchy, because of a failure to distinguish between the state and the government. However, absolute power was not based on the notion of the divine rights of kings, but derived through a contract that was mutually agreed upon and willingly acquiesced to. He dismissed the divine rights argument, but was unwilling to press the contractarian argument to its logical conclusion, for he did not provide for either a renewal of consent or a periodic assessment of the sovereign by the people.

The sovereign power or the "dominium'', a term used in *De Cive*, was authorized to enact laws as it deemed fit and such laws were legitimate. Hobbes was categorical that the powers and authority of the sovereign had to be defined with least ambiguity. The Leviathan was the sole source and interpreter of laws. He was the interpreter of divine and natural laws. Unlike Bodin, Hobbes did

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not circumscribe the power of the sovereign by placing it under divine and natural laws. In fact, the Leviathan was not even subject to civil laws, being the *sole source* of these laws. The sovereign was bound by these laws as long as they were not repealed. Hobbes defined the law as a command of the sovereign, a viewpoint adopted by Bentham and John Austin (1790-1859) in their descriptions of sovereignty. Since a law was the command of the sovereign, it could be wrong, unjust or immoral. The sovereign not only administered the law, but also enforced it. Voltaire, like Hobbes, favoured an absolute undivided sovereign power, which, however, would not be despotic. Since he, like Locke, was a passionate defender of liberty, he felt that a strong, centralized monarchy, totally modern and unhindered by medievalism, would ensure a good, just and progressive government.

Hobbes' theory of sovereignty was a precursor of Austin's theory. The sovereign enjoyed absolute powers only because the individuals had totally surrendered *their* powers. Hobbes conceptualized an absolute sovereign power only because of his thorough-going individualism. The absolute sovereign represented the individuals, and was constituted by them for providing order and security, and averting the worst of all evils, civil war.

Hobbes, unlike Bodin, was able to create order and stability by subordinating non-political associations, including the Church and universities. He did not recognize any pre-political order of society based on kinship, religion and other associations, which normally contributed to sociability in the individual. He was quite unsympathetic towards customs, traditions and other moralities that existed outside the purview of the sovereign law. On this basis, he proclaimed that law was not derived from the social institutions of a people, but was the command of the sovereign. This was because he ruled out private beliefs, which he considered to be the source of all seditions and dissensions. He also ruled out divisions and multiplicity of authority for that was an anathema to a stable political order. Authority was either unitary or nothing. He also made the sovereign above the law, thereby giving a death-blow to one of the most cherished legal doctrines of the medieval period.

The sovereign had the right and the duty to govern and conduct policy, protect civil society from dissolution, limit or restrict freedom of expression, opinions and doctrines, control subjects' property, resolve all conflicts through the right of judicature (of hearing and deciding all controversies), make war and peace with other nations, choose ministers, counsellors, magistrates, officers both in peace and war, confer honours and privileges, determine artificial religion and the forms of its worship, and prevent access to subversive literature. The subjects had no appeal against the will of the sovereign. Hobbes was against the division of sovereign authority as advocated by the parliamentarians in the England of his time. The subjects would never have the right to change the form of their government, because they were bound to obey a particular sovereign, and acknowledge his public acts as their own. As the individuals entered into a contract with one another and not with the sovereign power, they could never be freed from the subjection of the sovereign. The sovereign's subjects had a duty and an obligation to obey the sovereign, since the sovereign was the result of their social contract.

Justice for Hobbes was whatever free, rational and equal individuals agreed to leave out. He did not say much about what constitutes a just distribution of goods. As long as the distribution was the result of a freely entered agreement, the outcome was just. He asserted 'laws are the rules of just and unjust; nothing being reputed unjust, that is not contrary to some law". Just and unjust have meaning in relation to law and the law was the command of the sovereign.

Hobbes was the first to comprehend the nature of public power as a permanent, sovereign, rightful, and authorized representative to exercise powers "giving life and motion to society and the body politic". Sovereignty characterized the position rather than the person who wielded it. The sovereign will united all in one voice, "one will", and in the process ensured unity. The state, in Hobbes' theory, became the dominant institution in political and social life. The state changed the miserable,

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poor and nasty lives that individuals led prior to its establishment, and enabled them to pursue their interests. It was the ruthlessness of individuals that made the indivisible power of the state an absolute necessity. To Machiavelli's emphasis on interests, Hobbes added the dimension of fear, and provided a comprehensive theory of political absolutism that reconciled legitimate political authority with conflicting yet justified human demands. The sovereign created enough order to ensure that competition between discrete individuals became peaceful and orderly:

> The use of laws, which are but rules themselves is not to bind the people from all voluntary actions; but to direct and keep them in such a motion as not to hurt themselves by their own impetuous desires, rashness, or indiscretion, as hedges are set, not to stop travellers, but to keep them in the way.

Hobbes stipulated that for ensuring civil peace, lesser associations could exist only with the permission of the sovereign. Hobbes did not trust the motives of private associations and factions, for he saw them as a seed-bed for subversion. He subordinated the church to the sovereign. The church, being a corporation, would have a head who had to be a secular sovereign. The teachings of the church were lawful only when authorized by the state. Though a materialist, Hobbes professed faith in God and believed in the essential teachings of Christianity.

The cause for disorder, according to Hobbes, was general desirousness among individuals who were equal. The problem got compounded in a situation of scarcity. Social peace was only possible when individuals abandoned or restricted their passions and appetites, or if the available pool of resources was increased. Since the second option was not feasible, he preferred the first. There was no possibility of a metamorphosis of human nature. Instead, the political order was devised to accept human egoism and self-interest. The state was no longer visualized as a moral institution that would transform individuals. It was to restrain individuals through the overwhelming power of the sovereign, without preventing the pursuit of their desires. Since the state existed for individuals to fulfil their aspirations and ensure their well-being, Hobbes was therefore an individualist and a utilitarian. The sovereign's position is similar to a referee in a football match as the grand master of the rules. The political system for Hobbes meant a system of rules which was only possible if there was civil peace. A system of rules could become operative only if justice was understood as fairness, equality of rights and equality of treatment. To the question how would egotists be expected to act fairly towards one another and Hobbes' answer to individuals was follow the cardinal principle of 'do not that to others, you would not have done to yourself'. Fairness did not demand that individual forsake their egotism but that they imaginatively substitute others for oneself. Hobbes' equation of justice with fairness and equality has become part of political lexicon of subsequent liberalism. Further more Hobbes also made it clear that it was only with the creation of a common political language that political order was possible. To understand political order as being involving power, authority, law and institutions would be simplistic. The commonness of the meanings in politics depended on the ruling power capable of enforcing them, that is, declaring the precise meaning of right and punishing those who refused to accept the assertion. When this authority was prevented from enforcing definitions then the city was reduced to a condition where each member was at liberty to assign to words the meanings he chose. Hobbes rejected private reason as it not led to confusion of meanings but also destroyed the body politic as a communicating whole.

Hobbes' sovereign stood outside the society, and it was only fear and interest that supplied the reason for his existence. However, his analysis of power was over-simplistic, for power required not only the elimination of hindrances but also getting the citizens to participate actively. Hobbes separated community and public will, and it was Rousseau who subsequently "revived the older notion of a community as a corporate fellowship and then endowed it with the unity of will associated with the Hobbesian sovereign". Hobbes defined "representation by the way in which

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an action was performed, or by standards or expectations to which it must conform, rather than by any agreement concerning the right to do it or responsibility for it". The authorized sovereign had his limits, bound by the laws of nature to ensure peace and safety. The sovereign had duties towards the subject.

The sovereign would protect his subject from rebellion, and for this Hobbes laid down seven injunctions. The first was patriotic commitment to the status quo. The second, to resist demagogues; the third was to respect the established government. Fourth, there was a specific need for civic education. Fifth was the importance of discipline that was inculcated in the home. Sixth, there was a need for people to be taught about law and order, to abstain from violence, private revenge, dishonour to person and violation of property. Seventh, that right attitudes would bring about the right behaviour. Hobbes had faith in the universities to train and educate the citizen-elite with the help of his *Leviathan*.

Individualism and Liberalism

Individualism and absolutism of the state were two sides of the same coin in Hobbes' theory. Absolute sovereignty was the logical comple ment to riotous anarchy. His premises were individualistic and liberal, but his conclusions absolutist and illiberal, which was why his philosophy contained both liberal and illiberal features. It was liberal because the state and society were constituted by free and equal individuals who were egoistic, self-interested and selfish. It was liberal because it emphasized the element of consent as the basis of legitimate regulation of human affairs, as a yardstick for independence and choice in society. The illiberal aspect of Hobbes' theory was that an all-powerful absolute sovereign was a self-perpetuating one. There was no procedure to periodically renew the individual's consent to the sovereign power. The subject did not actively participate in the political process, nor was there a mechanism to secure his active support. Society itself was a loose composition of discrete individuals lacking cohesiveness.

The sovereign was the artificial person and continued as long as he did not offer grounds for resistance. Nor was there a check against arbitrary or tyrannical exercise of power in the form of a strong civil society. But it was to Hobbes' credit that he identified the source of absolute sovereign power and clearly defined its powers. The powers of the sovereign were neither intangible nor supernatural. The basis of political authority is consent which Locke refined subsequently through his formulation of two staged contract.

Hobbes accepted the discrete, egoistic, self-interested, atomistic individual as the building block of his all-powerful state edifice. The individual had the right to his private space, namely thoughts and economic activities. The individual did not get subsumed or merged in the all-powerful state. If the individual was threatened, then the Leviathan lost its rationale to exercise. Society was a cooperative enterprise as long as the individuals saw it as necessary for their well-being and benefit. Undoubtedly, Hobbes was the greatest and the most consistent individualist. He portrayed rugged individualism in politics, economics and religion:

> It is one of the oddities of Western political thought that the critics' image of the Hobbesian theory of sovereignty should have been anticipated in the famous frontispiece adorning the 1651 edition of the *Leviathan* ... the picture seems a perfect summary of Hobbes' thought: the blessings of peace are assured only when society is in total subjection to an absolute authority.

The Leviathan towered over the surroundings with a sword of war in one hand and the scales of justice in the other, overlooking an orderly and prosperous city, thriving under the peace he made possible. Hobbes reinforced this description by characterizing the Leviathan as the "mortal god", the "greatest of human powers" and "the greatest dominion that can be granted ... limited only by the strength and forces of the city itself, and by nothing else in the world". But as one looked more closely at the frontispiece, one saw that the sovereign's body was composed of a multitude of tiny

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individual figures—his subjects. The sovereign owed his existence to them, and derived his power from them. The individuals did not disappear into an anonymous mass or into a cohesive community, but retained their individuality and identity, implying that the awesome power was "less impressive than the rhetoric surrounding it".

Two themes interlaced one another to form the story of the *Leviathan*. One was the concern for order, and the other individualism. Absolutism and individualism complemented one another. The war of all against all resulted in an orderly society, but the race of life continued. Individuals as mechanical apparatuses, and as discrete, were still in competition with each other, striving for power and economic goods, though the conflict was no longer deadly but peaceful and intense. His individuals were post-medieval men of the early capitalist society, independent and essentially masterless. Absolutism did not end or marginalize individualism; it fused the separate elements of the political order into an organic community to provide enough order to eliminate the state of war.

Hobbes portrayed the idea of commonality in a society of particulars, and tried to complete the story begun by Machiavelli, namely the impact that the pursuit of interest left on political and social arrangements. Politics was about dealing with conflicting yet legitimate claims in a situation of scarcity:

> One result of Machiavelli's reformulation of political theory was to draw attention to the dynamic element of the uninhibited pursuit of interest and to establish interest as the departure point for most subsequent theorizing .... Machiavelli's prescriptions were woefully lacking in one vital element: some comprehensive principle, some notion of a unifying consensus for coping with the interest-ridden nature of the new politics.

Hobbes took the atomistic individuals, their instincts and reason, and the contractual agreement between them to be the model, excluding even the family as a source of morality and sociability. There was no place "for relationships of ascribed, historically given, status".

Liberty and the Right of Self-preservation

Hobbes defined freedom as the private pursuit of the individual, which implied that each individual could create his own conception of freedom within a framework of state authority. Liberty was defined as whatever the law permitted, and on whatever the law was silent. Liberty signified absence of restraints and coercion. Hobbes accepted the right to private beliefs, for conscience was beyond the reach of the Leviathan, who could not oblige men to believe, since thought was free. However, the Leviathan could command the individual to perform ceremonies that were necessary for public worship.

Hobbes made a beginning to identify and safeguard what was essentially a private sphere of the individual, where none, including the state, could exercise control. The private-public divide became more forceful in Locke's philosophy, with his statement on inalienable individual rights and a conception of a limited state.

The limits of the state could be seen from Hobbes defence of property. Although in principle the sovereign was absolute, with rights over private property, there would be no undue interference in the individual's private affairs, including economic activity. The individuals would have the liberty to buy and sell, and otherwise contract with one another. The state could provide public charity for the destitute, but beyond that it was not its task to actively promote the "felicity" of the subjects.

To the vast array of absolute powers that Hobbes assigned to the sovereign, there was only one limitation, namely the right of self-preservation, seen as an absolute right of the individual. The sovereign could not command a man to kill himself, for life was a gift by nature to man; no one could order the killing of an individual. The right remained an inalienable right of individuals, since the basic motive for total surrender of their powers was self-preservation. If the sovereign

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failed to protect the individual, the individual had the right to resist the sovereign. If resistance was successful, the sovereign ceased to be a sovereign, and individuals would return to a state of nature where there would be no sovereign power to acknowledge. They would be free to obey a de facto new monarch.

The right of resistance could be invoked only when the right of self-preservation got threatened. Hobbes was categorical that human actions were influenced by considerations of safety and not narrow gains, thus ruling out the modern interpretation of some (like Gauthier and Hampton) that Hobbes was interested in calculating utilities.

The minority could not resist the sovereign on the grounds that it was the *majority* who had chosen the sovereign. Nor could there be resistance to tyrannical rule of the sovereign, for punishment of unjust rulers was to be left to God. Resistance was justified only when the sovereign sought to destroy the individual directly, and not when he tried to destroy others. The right of personality or self-preservation, according to Cassirer (1946), was a universal right in Hobbes' philosophy. As long as the sovereign existed, he enjoyed absolute, undivided, inalienable powers with just one limitation, namely the right to preserve individuals. For Hobbes, a sovereign was one who could remain and act as a sovereign.

Political Obligation

Hobbes offered a number of reasons as to why the sovereign was to be obeyed. First, there was a purely prudential consideration that if individuals disobeyed the sovereign they would be punished. Second, there was a moral consideration that they must honour their contracts, provided others did so as instructed by the first three laws of nature. The *Leviathan* ensured that all parties adhered to the terms of the covenant. Third, there was a political consideration that the sovereign was their duly authorized representative, created consensually by the citizens authorizing him to act on their behalf. Last, Hobbes offered a religious argument when he asserted that the civil law and the law of nature was one, and that both were to be obeyed, since they implied God's commands. Strauss (1936) saw Hobbes' obligation as physical, for the sovereign by virtue of his overwhelming power and authority could ultimately command his subjects to obey him. The subjects on their part obeyed the sovereign out of fear of punishment. Taylor (1938) argued that the Hobbesian theory of political obligation was not logically linked to the psychological nature of man that he presented, but instead arose from the laws of nature that he offered. Taylor insisted that the laws of nature were not mere "pieces of advice about the prudent pursuit of self interest" but were moral laws which dictated duties, and were obligatory because they were commanded by God. Taylor contended that Hobbes' civil philosophy had to be understood in the sense of two contrasting and disconnected subsystems: theistic deontology, and an egoistic psychology.

Oakeshott (1975) thought it would be a mistake to interpret Hobbes' obligation as primarily based on individual self-interest. On the contrary, he viewed it as a mixed obligation consisting of physical, rational and moral obligations. Since civil society was a complex system of authority and power, each element had its own appropriate obligation. There was a *moral obligation* to obey the authorized will of the sovereign, which was not based on self-interest. Moral obligation arose from obedience to the sovereign authority, whose basis was the consent of the governed. There was a *physical obligation* that was derived from the fact that the sovereign represented power, compelling the individual to eventually obey or face the consequences of disobedience. Last, there was a *rational obligation* based on self-interest, as" the individual desired peace and order. "Each of these obligations provides a separate motive for observing the order of the commonwealth and each is necessary for the preservation of that order".

Warrender (1957) believed that Hobbes' political obligation could not be derived from the postulates of human psychology, but from the body of natural laws with an independent authority which Hobbes understood as the will or command of God. The laws of nature played a crucial and

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pivotal role, for in the lawless state of nature they prompted individuals to contract and establish a sovereign. These laws persisted through the state of nature into civil society, and were essentially moral in nature, prescribing duties. They were morally obligatory, for the sovereign interpreted and rendered them fully operative.

Warrender pointed out that there were two systems in Hobbes' theory: a system of motives, and a system of obligation. The system of motives ended with the supreme principle of self-preservation, while the system of obligation closed with an obligation to obey natural law.

The fundamental law of nature was not self-preservation, but to seek peace, giving

a more social and less self-regarding appearance that is often associated with Hobbes' theory. These peace enjoining laws are not maxims of personal success nor even personal rules for keeping alive, they are concerned with the conservation of society; and they are, to quote Hobbes, contrary to our natural passions.

Hobbes understood political obligation as essentially based on a theory of duty within the natural law tradition. There was a nexus between salvation and obedience, and political obligation was essentially moral.

Macpherson (1973) contended that Hobbes' theory of human nature was deduced from his analysis of man's materialistic behaviour within a bourgeois society governed by the market, and that the theory was not universally valid. Such a view was necessary and possible only in a possessive market society. The materialistic assumption enabled Hobbes to assume that individuals had an equal need to be in continuous motion, and this equal need established an equal right and a moral obligation. The market assumption enabled Hobbes to presume that men were equal in their insecurity. "Hobbes was able to treat his political obligation as a moral obligation because it was derived from a transfer of rights which he treated as moral rights". Pitkin (1967) pointed out that Hobbes tried to explain and defend political obligation so as to preclude acts of rebellion, revolt, anarchy or civil war. Obligation followed from the law of nature, which dictated self-preservation, and everything logically flowed from it.

6.5 Women and the Gender Question

Hobbes as an exponent of human equality argued that nature provided no rationale for inequality of rights and privileges, nor were human relationships natural, for all authority was based on consent. Consent meant submission willingly and voluntarily in exchange for protection of one's life. Since women were as capable as men, they did not require any protection from men. Protection was required by both the subject and the child, who were dependent on the sovereign and parents respectively. In the case of a child, it was the mother as a parent who constituted authority and guaranteed protection by virtue of giving birth to the child. The child in the process granted her its consent.

In the state of nature, every woman who had children became both a *mother* and a *lord*. A mother lost the right of authority over her child if taken prisoner, in which case she selected the person who would exert authority over her child in her absence. Hobbes described the idea of female subordination as a human creation. Male heirs were preferred to females, for they were naturally fitter for labour and danger. In a state of nature, the natural domination of the mother was accepted, because it was *she* who could declare the father of her child.

For Hobbes, the family, like the state, was an artificial or a conventional institution and had to be seen in strictly rational terms. It was a "civil person" by virtue of jurisdiction, not by virtue of marriage or biological parenthood. It was not based on natural ties of sentiments between generations, but, like the state, arose from the consent of its individual members. With regard to who would govern within the family, one would assume that given Hobbes' position on the equality of sexes; he would grant joint rights and authority to both men and women. But this was

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not the case. He gave to the father exclusive jurisdiction within the family, thereby defending patriarchy. The wife/mother as a free and an equal individual disappeared with the constitution of civil society. The woman became subservient, losing her ability to consent and the right to participate in the political process. Though Hobbes accepted the idea of sexual and gender equality, revolutionary in itself by seventeenth-century standards, he did not reject nor attack patriarchy in the full sense.

Hobbes saw his commonwealth as a creation by the father(s). When discussing the problem of succession to the sovereign in the state, he acknowledged that it would pass from one male child to another, since males had greater wisdom and courage, and were naturally fit to rule. All these certainly contradicted his earlier attack on patriarchal claims. The reason for the shift could be that he did not want a conflict between the male and female once civil society was created. "Hobbes' thought reflects and perpetuates a distinctively masculinist orientation to the realm of politics that continues to be male dominated and governed by masculinist presumptions in our time".

The significance of Hobbes' political thought was the departure he made from patriarchalism of the mid-seventeenth century. He insisted that paternal power in the state of nature was not derived from fatherhood as such. Since the family's importance was only because of its procreative functions, and if sovereignty was a product of procreation, then the mother was also an equal and full partner in the act of generation with claims over the child. By denying the patriarchal claims he dismissed the idea that all authority, including that of the parents, was natural. Subordination among human beings was a product of convention subject to consent.

Self-Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Hobbes' book Leviathan published in ..... .
2. Thomas Hobbes first Publication was a translation in English of ..... .
3. In 1657, the ..... was reported to the parliamentary committee as a most poisonous piece of atheism.
4. De Corpore was published in ..... .

6.6 Summary

- The *Leviathan* of Hobbes has been recognized as one of the masterpieces of political theory, known for its style, clarity and lucid exposition. He laid down a systematic theory of sovereignty, law, human nature and political obligation. He accepted the views of the radical writers of the sixteenth century like Montaigne, and attacked Aristotelianism and Ciceronian Humanism. He discarded the notion that there was anything as "simply good", for every individual would regard what pleased him as good, and dismiss that which displeased him as evil. The way to overcome this ethical disagreement was by acknowledging that each was justified in defending one's self, and that others could be harmed on grounds of self-defence. Self-preservation was a fundamental right of nature, and equally a basic law.
- Hobbes argued that the state was established for human convenience, and obeyed on grounds of expediency. It was obeyed in most cases, since obedience was more agreeable than disobedience. It was a product of human reason, and hence reason and not authority had to be the arbiter in politics. He emphasized that the sovereign would define divine, natural or fundamental law, since it was difficult to obtain agreement among individuals, and thus made power, not right, the focal issue in politics. Hobbes saw the state as a conciliator of interests, a point of view that the Utilitarians developed in great detail. Hobbes created an all-powerful state, but it was no totalitarian monster. It had to guarantee peace, order and security, and was not interested in self-glorification. The state did not control or regiment

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areas that were politically irrelevant. Hobbes accepted the fact that there were many types of human activities that had to be left to the realm of the non-political.

- Many of Hobbes' critics felt the need to control government by the superior authority of society. Lawson (1657) and Whitehall, contemporary critics of Hobbes, demanded the need to bind the rulers by law, else they would usurp little by little. All of them feared the consequences of arbitrary power. Clarendon and Whitehall asserted that Hobbes had no idea of practical politics, and that his theorem of government was artificial. All his critics insisted on the need to provide for a limited and constitutional authority. Locke himself scorned Hobbes' prescription of providing absolute authority without adequate safeguards to prevent the abuse and misuse of power.
- Many of Hobbes' critics denied the reality of the state of nature, both as a statement of fact or as a hypothesis. If individuals were so asocial, they would never have been able to come together to establish a civil society and government. If they could do so, then they would have never gone without it. His critics insisted that Hobbes' depiction of the state of nature was unreal, grossly exaggerated and even misleading. Bramhall (1658: 503) commented that the Hobbesian conception of human nature was a libel on individuals, for he characterized them worse than bears and wolves. Eachard (1672: 14) felt that humankind, contrary to Hobbes' analysis, was tolerably tame and that society did not reflect the wickedness that Hobbes wanted us to believe. Clarendon was confident that God did not make human beings lower than animals. According to his modern interpreters, Hobbes showed human beings to be morally neutral by nature, for it was possible to achieve happiness by one's own efforts, without God's grace. Happiness and goodness were entirely matters of an individual's ability to form society and control it rationally.
- Furthermore, Hobbes' notion of absolute state sovereignty was developed at length by Austin and Bentham. He pointed out that Aristotle failed to identify a tenable conception of sovereignty, and mistakenly supposed that laws could be sovereign, for it was not individuals, words or promises but arms that made the force and power of laws. The unsociability of human nature—a facet of human personality—had be taken into cognizance while delineating a theory of sovereignty. Therefore, a human being backed by swords and arms was the true sovereign in a commonwealth. Unlike Aristotle, Hobbes did not see the existence of the state in terms of its guarantee of a good life, but in terms of the security and safety it provided. Relationships between humans were not those of friendship, but rivalry. The significance of Hobbes lies in the fact that he set aside, rebuked and rejected the dominant Aristotelian tradition which looked upon social and political relations as natural, and peace and accommodation as part and parcel of normal functioning. "For two centuries after him self-interest seemed to most thinkers a more obvious motive than disinterestedness, and enlightened self-interest a more applicable remedy for social ills than any form of collective action". Hobbes did not establish the link between social and political factors and the fact that political practices were shaped by social relationships. As a result he was able to clearly identify and establish the ambit of the political "For Hobbes, the political in a society comprised three elements: the authority whose unique office it was to superintend the whole and to exert directive control over other forms of activity; the obligations which rested on those who accepted membership; and the system of common rules governing publicly significant behaviour".
- Hobbes' greatest contribution was his philosophy of individualism, making him not only a thorough-going modern thinker, but also a person in line with the times to come. Furthermore, he emphasized that human beings without a government would be in a permanent state of insecurity, viewing war and conflicf as permanent and normal conditions. In the process, "Hobbes treats the problems of politics as an aspect of a universal human dilemma involving freedom and security".

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At an international conference held in Helsinki in 1987, an important consensus emerged among scholars that the proposition of a world state might be absurd and premature, for nation states would continue as long as humanity remained concerned with the right of self-preservation and the need to secure commodious living. These observations vindicated the essential postulates of Hobbes' paradigm, and reiterated its relevance for times to come.

- In summation, the twentieth century with its complexities and problems has made it possible to appreciate the concerns that Hobbes exhibited namely power, peace and science. There was an interest in trying to understand the "power relations, necessary, possible and desirable between men", for Hobbes was the first to lay down the science of power politics. We share Hobbes' concern in trying to devise ways and means for ensuring order and commodious living. Above all, we share and appreciate his method of science. However, the modern world values the rule of law, rather than the person who really wields it, and in this sense Hobbes' prescriptions were pre-modern. The modern view of power is also different, as Persons remarked, power in modern society is more like money. It is a functional category like others thus differing considerably from Hobbes' notion. Moreover, with the democratic revolution of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, struggle for power has been replaced with struggle for recognition, thereby drastically modifying the role of the singular, personalized sovereign. But for understanding this historic transformation of humankind, an understanding of Hobbes is an essential prerequisite.

6.7 Key-Words

1. An unaccountable sovereign : A person or group empowered to decide every social and political issue.
2. Right of Judicator : Of hearing and deciding all controversies.

6.8 Review Questions

1. Critically examine the concept of individualism.
2. Explain the Hobbes, Social Contract.
3. What are Hobbes views of Social Contract? Explain.
4. Explain Hobbes views on the rights and duties of the sovereign.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. 1651
2. Thucydides
3. Leviathan
4. 1655

6.9 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Unit 7: John Locke

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss the limitations of ownership of property.
- Explain ideas on consent, resistance and toleration.
- Understand the views on sovereignty.
- Evaluate Locke's social contract theory.

Introduction

Liberalism as a political creed began with John Locke (1632-1704). This was a unique achievement, as there were no liberals before Locke, though there were many socialists before Marx. The origins and detailed delineation of the liberal order, both in the political and societal dimensions, was the singular achievement of Locke. The breadth of vision that Locke espoused by offering a theory which combined constitutionalism, stability, freedom, consent, property and tolerance has played a crucial and pivotal role in an orderly development of Western democracies. The seminal importance of Locke in the evolution of political institutions and theory is accepted by all commentators, but there are wide areas of disagreement about their meaning and implications.

Locke has been interpreted very differently by Laslett (1960), Macpherson (1973) and Ashcraft (1980, 1986 and 1987). Laslett convincingly demonstrated that Locke was neither a spokesman of Whig orthodoxy nor a defender of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Macpherson (1973), in contrast, analyzed Locke as an apologist and a theorist of bourgeois society. Ashcraft drew attention to Locke's radicalism by his active involvement in the revolutionary process. Ashcraft interprets Locke as revolutionary and that has created problems for both the left and right. All along, the left and the Marxists interpreted Locke as an apologist of bourgeois society. The right found it equally discomfiting to accept that the Glorious Revolution had a revolutionary side to it. All along, they projected it as a symbol of the incremental and evolutionary process of change.

Locke's concepts of constitutionalism, toleration, natural rights, limited consensual and law-based authority; pluralism and property had a significant impact beyond the English settlement of 1688 in establishing and nurturing a liberal society in England, and in inspiring similar traditions in America, France and Holland. The American and the French Revolutions and the constitutional edifice in the United States were Lockeian in spirit and letter. Locke's ideas, especially his doctrine

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of tolerance, government by consent and realization of human freedom in its economic and political contexts, found concrete expression with the discovery of the American continent, as exemplified by his statement right at the outset of the book that the world in the beginning was like America. It is also interesting to note that the libertarian philosophy characterized by optimism and abundance was made possible as a result of the discovery of America. Prior to Locke, political theorists from Plato and Hobbes were confronted with the problem of scarcity. The discovery of America symbolized human emancipation, making it possible to conceive of a society of plenty, freedom and order.

No political thinker had influenced political theorizing on two different countries in two different continents as Locke did. He was the guiding and spiritual father of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment period, particularly for philosophers like Rousseau and Voltaire. He was acknowledged as the founder of modern empiricism with Hume, Berkeley, J.S. Mill, Russell and Ayer as its exponents. He was also the inspiration for early feminists like Mary Astell (1666–1708), Lady Cudworth Masham (1658–1708), Catherine Totter Cockburn (1769–1849), Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762), Catherine Macaulay Sawbridge Graham (1731–1791) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797). These feminists accepted Locke's belief in the supremacy of reason, rejection of patriarchy and political absolutism, and in the importance of nurture as opposed to nature. Locke's view of labour as a source of value and entitlement was the framework within which the Classical economists present their case for capitalist appropriation. Paradoxically, the same theory was used by Marx to argue against capitalism and propose a socialist alternative. Thus Locke's "thought provided for the eighteenth century a metaphysics and a theory of education, theology, morals and politics that meshed well with the rising tide of individualism, utilitarianism and capitalism".

Locke was soundly convinced that a society which practised toleration in intellectual and religious matters was the most desirable order that humankind aspired to achieve. His visit to Holland in 1683 reaffirmed this belief. He desired for England a society where citizens could enjoy the liberty and opportunity of free enquiry. He liberated modern thought from the tutelage of Scholasticism, earning him credit as the father of the Enlightenment.

Locke was evasive about his authorship of the *Two Treatises* and, he published these texts anonymously. The only time that he acknowledged it (and that too indirectly), was in 1704 when he wrote a codicil to his will naming the *Two Treatises* among his several other anonymous works for the benefit of the Bodleian library. On another occasion (in 1703), he recommended the books along with Aristotle's *Politics* and Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* to a distant cousin.

There is considerable controversy regarding the time period and the intent of the two texts. The book was published two years after the successful completion of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the deposition of the Catholic King James II and the accession of Protestant King William and Queen Mary to the English throne. The Revolution marked the beginnings of limited constitutional monarchy and parliamentary supremacy, preparing the way for the emergence of a representative democratic system. Though the realization of mass democracy, with the principle of one man one vote, came about in the first quarter of twentieth century in Great Britain, the significance of the Glorious Revolution and Locke's *Second Treatise* was because it stated clearly the importance of constitutionalism, limited state power and individual rights.

Locke was interpreted as a collectivist, because of his insistence that the community would be ruled by the will of the majority. He was seen as a champion of individuality. He was the spokesperson of the liberal constitutional order, criticizing Wolin's portrayal of the philosopher for providing an intellectual defence of the sublimation of the political to the social dimension of life (Pateman 1975: 443, 458–462). He was depicted as an enemy of patriarchism, preparing the grounds for women's equal rights.

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7.1 Life Sketch

Locke was born in a Somerset village in England in the summer of 1632. His parents came from Puritan trading and landowning families, and were sympathetic to the parliamentarians and the Whigs during the Civil War. His father was a notary, while his grandfather was a tanner and clothier. The family was not well-off. However, in later life Locke enjoyed sufficient income from family estates, and was able to lead the life of a gentleman scholar. Locke's father owned some land and lived as an attorney and clerk to the justices of the peace in Somerset. Locke went to Westminster School in 1647, and then enrolled himself in Christchurch College as a student in 1652 for 15 years till 1667. He continued to retain his links with Christchurch until 1684. After graduation, Locke developed an interest in medicine. He completed MA in 1658, became a lecturer in Greek in 1661, and a lecturer in rhetoric in 1663. In 1664, he became a censor of moral philosophy.

The only other political theorist who combined so many interests was Aristotle. From them, Locke learnt a lot, including the important fact that for discovering the secrets of nature, sustained and disciplined observation coupled with humility, patience and hard work were required. The important Continental philosophers of the early scientific revolution, Descartes and Gassendi, influenced him considerably. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1688. Locke's first works were written at Oxford, namely the *Two Tracts on Government* in 1660—1662, and the *Essays on the Law of Nature* in Latin in 1664. In both these writings, he argued against religious toleration, and denied consent as the basis of legitimate government. Both these early writings were published only in this century. His *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1679) was forbidden as a text for tutorial discussions in Oxford and its colleges.

Did u know? Locke also participated in chemical and medical researches of eminent people like Robert Boyle, Hooker, David Thomas, Richard Lower, Thomas Willis and Thomas Sydenham.

In 1665–1666, Locke undertook a diplomatic mission to Cleves. Within a year of the meeting, Locke joined Ashley's household in London. This proved to be a turning point in Locke's life. In 1668, Ashley underwent a major and difficult liver operation under Locke's supervision, which was successful against all odds. By 1679, Locke became a patron, political associate and friend of the earl. For the next 14 years, till Shaftesbury's death, Locke remained closely associated with the earl, with his own fortunes rising and falling along with those of the earl. Locke was suspected of being the author of *A Letter from Person of Quality to his Friend in the Country*. The pamphlet angered the government, compelling Locke to make a hasty departure for France in 1675. During this time he met French doctors, scientists, and theologians and befriended many of them. He also translated some of Pierre Nicole's moral essays. At the end of April 1679, he returned to London. Philosophers travelled abroad to grasp the wonders of the world, and this was the case with Locke too.

Notes In 1666, Locke met—for the first time—Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper, later the first Earl of Shaftesbury, an important political figure in the court of Charles II.

From Shaftesbury, Locke learnt the intricacies and responsibilities of the state in the domestic market and external commerce. He also realized that the primary responsibility of the state was to

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bring economic prosperity. Shaftesbury's commitment to toleration for dissenters made him campaign vigorously for toleration and the freedom of the press. This became evident from *An Essay Concerning Toleration* (1667). Shaftesbury's position during the Exclusion crisis of 1680 impressed upon Locke the need for consent as the basis of a legitimate political system. The earl was the rallying figure during the Exclusion crisis. Shaftesbury was Locke's mentor, friend, philosopher and guide. He played a profound role in shaping Locke's political perceptions and establishing his reputation as an eminent theorist.

In 1683, Locke went into exile in Holland, fearing implication in the Rye House Plot. The British government tried to get him extradited but was unsuccessful. His studentship of Christchurch College was withdrawn in 1684 on a royal command from Charles II. All these punitive measures were taken because Locke had participated actively in the movement for curtailing royal power and supporting the Monmouth's rebellion. Meanwhile, Lord Shaftesbury died in 1683. This explained the anonymity of the *Two Treatises* and the complete secrecy that Locke maintained with regard to his work and activities. This was partly political and partly psychological. He was known to be excessively secretive, and this trait got attenuated due to the volatile and turbulent political phase of the 1680s. He took considerable efforts to conceal his real intentions and activities, and the execution of Alegernon Sidney cautioned all radicals including Locke who was in exile.

After the success of the Glorious Revolution, Locke came to prominence. He returned to England. Three of his works were published, making him famous and distinguished. He spent the remaining part of his life in the household of Sir Francis and Lady Masham in the countryside far north of London. Locke shared a close relationship with Lady Masham before her marriage. She was Damaris Cudworth, daughter of the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth.

Did u know? During his exile in 'Holland, Locke completed his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (which he had begun writing in 1671), and *The Letter on Toleration*, published anonymously in 1689.

Locke, in the later part of his life, was the Commissioner for Appeals and Trade, who dealt with the problems of the English colonies. He opposed the colonial policy from 1668 to 1675. He looked upon the colonization of America as a solution to the economic crisis in England following the Great Plague of 1665. He opposed colonization for it depleted England of good people. He also feared that colonies would become independent of the mother country and compete with it.

Locke played an influential role in the repeal of the Act for the Regulation of Printing in 1695 and in the re-coinage of the debased English currency in the 1690s. Before his death, he attained fame, both nationally and internationally. Some of his minor works, like *Raising the Value of Money and Some Considerations on the Lowering of Interests* appeared in print in 1691, though these were written in 1668. This was followed by the *Second Letter on Toleration* (1691) and the *Third Letter on Toleration* (1692), written in response to the criticism made by Jonas Proast. In 1693, *Some Thoughts on Education* and in 1695, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* were published. Locke died on October 29, 1704.

7.2 Locke and the Glorious Revolution

The historical background of the *Second Treatise* was the years of rebellion and revolution against the English throne, which, however, was not revealed in its preface. Locke stated his objective in writing the text, namely to establish the throne of King William and "... to justify to the World, the People of England, whose love of their" Just and Natural Rights, with their Resolution to preserve them, saved the nation when it was on the very brink of slavery and Ruins".

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The preface had convinced many that the tract articulated and defended the philosophical concepts and the political solution of the Glorious Revolution. (Cranston 1957; Laski 1920: 29; Lamprecht 1918: 141–143; Plamentaz 1963: Vol. I: 212*ff*; Sabine 1973: 518*ff*; Stephen 1902: 135; Tawney 1954: 214). Locke was seen as the apostle of the Revolution, and the *Second Treatise* as a justification of the Revolution.

Laslett was among the earliest to digress from this accepted version. He contended that the *Two Treatises* might have been written during the Exclusion crisis of 1679–1681. Though the books were published in 1690, their purpose was not to justify the Revolution. He built his argument on a hint by Fox-Bourne that the *Second Treatise* could have been written before, instead of after, the accession of King William to the throne. The substantial part of the text might have been written in 1682–1683 when Locke was in exile in Holland. The *First Treatise* could have been written during 1681–1682. However, Fox-Bourne, unlike Laslett, thought that the two texts might have been prepared fully after the Revolution. Though they were not written for the purpose of defending the Revolution, they could be seen as the basis of Whig orthodoxy. "The *Two Treatises* turns not to be a demand for a revolution to be brought about, nor a rationalization of a revolution in need of a defence".

Cranston argued out that the texts were written 10 years before the Revolution, in order to justify and create the arguments for the revolution that was being planned. He agreed with Laslett that Locke was a philosopher writing about politics, as evident from the first sentence of the preface.

Thou hast here the beginning and the end of a discourse concerning government; what fate has otherwise disposed of the papers that should have filled up the middle and were more than all the rest, it is not worthwhile to tell thee [for it shows that] it belonged not to settled years of the reign of William and Mary but to the perilous years of the Protestant Plot against Charles II. The *Two Treatises* when it was first written was a seditious and inflammatory document.

In the entire sequence of events leading up to the Glorious Revolution was the crucial figure of the Earl of Shaftesbury. "Without Shaftesbury, Locke would not have been Locke" (Laslett 1960: 40). Very likely, Locke articulated the ideas of Shaftesbury, considering they shared a "community of ideas". One could discern a shift and subsequently a change in Locke's political outlook. Till 1659, he was a right-wing monarchist welcoming the Restoration. Till 1664, he was an authoritarian endorsing the Hobbesian position in the *Leviathan*. It was only after 1666, when he met the Earl, that the ideas which were characterized as Lockeian took shape. Prior to this, Locke willingly granted the civil magistrate absolute and arbitrary power over the individual, was opposed to toleration of religious dissent, did not believe in parliamentary supremacy—a theory of inalienable natural rights—nor did he defend the right of the people to resist their rulers. At this time he accepted the distinction between secular and spiritual power, political and religious authority. "*The Second Treatise* was not a text in philosophy but a party book, a work of propaganda designed to promote the political objectives of Shaftesbury and the Whigs".

Ashcraft asserted that the *Second Treatise* was written in 1681–1682. This was followed by the *First Treatise*. Franklin (1978) pointed out that contrary to the compromise formula that emerged during the Glorious Revolution the Lockeian position was not even the majoritarian perspective within the Whig Party. The Whigs in 1688, more than in 1680, were willing to accept parliamentary supremacy and limited constitutional monarchy. Locke accepted the argument of the Whigs that political power was in the nature of a trust, but he understood people to mean the general community, and not when constituted as a parliament. This was a Whig position which became a part of the settlement after the Revolution. Thus, Locke was more radical than the Whigs. The *Two Treatises* contained radical and moderate ideas. Its radicalism was clothed in a language of moderation. Moreover, the Whigs built their case of parliamentary supremacy and constitutional monarchy by invoking an argument of ancient constitution based on tradition history and customs, whereas Locke espoused liberal constitutionalism by appealing to reason.

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Marshall (1994: 205–291) and Wootton (1993: 49–89) agreed with Ashcraft, but made some clarifications. Wootton contended that the *Second Treatise* was written in late 1681. Marshall, on the other hand, pointed out that the *First Treatise* was written in 1681 and the *Second Treatise* in late 1682 or early 1683, after Charles II began *quo warranto* proceedings against the charter of the London corporation, giving the crown control of the franchise in the city and supervision of the sheriffs who appointed London juries. Both these actions undermined the Whig position.

The seventeenth century was an important period, a watershed in English political and constitutional history. Broadly, four distinct phases could be identified: (*a*) from the accession of James I to the Civil War in 1641; (*b*) from 1642 to 1660, a commonwealth under Cromwell; (*c*) restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660 to the Exclusion crisis of 1679–1681; and (*d*) the Glorious Revolution of 1688. In all these four phases, the main question centred around the relevance of absolute monarchy, and the need to limit the power of the monarch against the growing assertiveness of the parliament.

The Civil War failed to resolve the problem. The execution of Charles I brought about a breach in the monarchial tradition. While resistance against the king as a person was justified, the title and authority of the king remained intact. On the one hand, the idea that the king could do no wrong gave the king a sense of independence from the parliament. On the other hand, the parliament desired to legislate without the king. In the political tug of war, the idea of absolute, divine, hereditary powers of the king came in handy for the royalists. The parliamentarians, and in particular the Whigs, chose to articulate the idea of political power as a trust, with the parliament or legislature defining the purposes of the trust. In this sense, the character of the English revolution was limited (Laski 1920: 70). Its most distinctive aspect according to Franklin (1978) was (unlike elsewhere in Europe), the House of Commons—the arena where opposing factions advanced their rival theories of sovereignty.

Charles II being childless decided that James II, his younger brother, a devout Catholic, would succeed him to the throne. This meant a reign by unending Catholic monarchs in a Protestant country. The English Parliament would have had to change or ignore the rule of hereditary succession. The problem, unlike in the Civil War, was not the breakdown of sovereignty, but one of its presence and limits. The immediate question was the right of resistance to the sovereign, and if so, when Charles II dissolved the parliament so as to prevent it from excluding James a group of Whigs faced treason. Following the Rye House plot, Lord Russell and Sidney were arrested and executed.

Had James II died without a son, the next in succession would have been his daughter Mary, who along with her husband William of Orange indicated their willingness to accept the English throne. On hearing this news, James II fled unofficially, abdicating and thus avoiding the issue of whether Parliament had indeed appointed William and Mary as joint monarchs.

In this debate between divine, hereditary sovereigns and republican democracy, a need was felt for a theory that could preserve individualism, stability, and consent of the governed, while acknowledging the right of resistance. Hobbes' *Leviathan* was not fully acceptable because of its atheism, harsh egoism and defence of absolute monarchy with a consensual basis. With the Restoration of 1660, the debate between the Royalists and Republicans died down, but resurfaced when the succession of James II became imminent. In the renewed controversy, Filmer's long-forgotten *Patriarcha or the Natural Power of the King* became politically and ideologically important to defend the claims of Charles II. *Patriarcha* was written in 1653–1654 but was published for the first time in 1680 to counter the pressure of the exclusionists and the Whigs. Filmer's theory was refuted by Locke, Tyrrell (*Patriarcha non Monarcha* in 1681) and Sidney (who denounced Filmer from the scaffold).

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Filmer's Theory

Filmer contended that patriarchal authority was absolute, and that political authority was analogous to paternal authority. Having created Adam, God gave him authority over his family, the earth and its products. Adam was the first king, and present kings derived their rightful authority from this grant. Adam was both the first father and the first king. Subsequent generations of men were not born free, but were subject to Adam and his successors with the power of fathers derived from God. Since God's original grant to Adam was unconditional, monarchical rule was unlimited. Any attempt to restrain absolutism would result in a limited or mixed monarchy. Divided sovereignty would weaken authority. Filmer did not support tyranny, for he made the monarch obey God's laws.

Filmer was critical of contractualism, contending that if contractual arguments were true, then it would result in two unacceptable consequences which its advocates would find hard to explain. First, it would not be possible to provide for a continuing valid political authority. If all authority rested on consent, then an individual who had not consented was not bound by the laws, implying that minorities, dissenters, non-voters (women and children) need not obey the law and a new ruler if one had not consented to them. This would make society unstable. If on the contrary one contended that succeeding generations would have to obey because their fathers and forefathers had expressed their consent, then such an argument did not differ from the one championed by the patriarchists. Filmer contended, contrary to the contractualists, that men were not born free but into families, and hence subject to the authority of their fathers. Moreover, relationships of subordination were natural. Individuals were not equal, for a son was subject to the authority of his father.

The second argument revolved around property rights. Filmer pointed out that the contractualists like Grotius and Joha Selden 1584–1654 escaped the absolutist implications of Adam's dominion over the world, only by construing God's grant as a general one given to all mankind in common, not a private grant to an individual. Filmer thought it was problematic, for one who tried to defend private property would raise the spectre of communism in economics, just as contractualism aroused the spectre of anarchy in politics. How could a communal grant give rise to private property? Why would God have originally ordained community of possession if it were not to last, and how could the abandonment of this primitive communism be morally binding unless every single individual had consented to it—of which consent there was no record? How could such consent be binding on posterity which would surely be born— according to the contractualists—with its original common right to all?

Filmer thought that those who could explain the origin of government with reference to consent of free individuals would find it difficult to establish either feasible or morally acceptable political authority or rightful private possession of goods. Not only did Locke refute Filmer's patriarchal theory, but he also had to prove that his criticism of contractualism was absurd. In particular, Locke had to explain origins of political power and private property, the two central arguments of Filmer's anti-contractualism.

In the *First Treatise*, Locke rejected the central points of Filmer. These were reiterated in the opening passage" of the *Second Treatise*. Locke's arguments were broadly four:

1. God did not give the relevant power to Adam.
2. Assuming Adam had been granted this power did not mean that his heirs had a right to it.
3. Even if Adam's heirs *did* have such a right, there were no clear rules of succession according to which rightful heirs could be named.
4. Even if there were such rules, it would be impossible to identify Adam's actual heirs, considering the time span since God's original grant of power to him (Locke 1960: 307).

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7.3 Locke's Political Theory

The *First Treatise* was a critique of Filmer's theory, while the *Second Treatise* explained the "true original extent and end of civil government". Filmer and not Hobbes was the main antagonist of Locke (Laslett 1960: 60). Nor was Locke presenting a disguised and moderate version of Hobbes, as alleged by some of the late seventeenth-century audiences.

Locke adopted the technique of social contract to explain that legitimate political authority was derived from the consent of its people, which could be withdrawn when the freedom of the individual was violated or curtailed. The *Two Treatises* espoused and defended freedom, consent and property as cardinal principles of legitimate political power, which was defined as:

> ... the Right of making laws with penalties of Death and consequently all less Penalties, for Regulating and Preserving of Property, and of employing the force of the Community, in the Execution of such Laws and in the defence of the Commonwealth from Foreign Inquiry and all this only for the Public Good (Locke 1960: 308).

Locke saw political power as a trust, with the general community specifying its purposes and aims. He rejected Filmer's claims of absolutism and patriarchism.

Freedom and Rights

The origins of the notion of rights can be traced to late medieval thought and the natural rights tradition to the natural law doctrine in Greek philosophy. In the twelfth century, the concept of rights emerged in European thought and was fully developed by the end of the fourteenth century into a coherent theoretical construct. The Italian philosopher and theologian, Aquinas for whom there existed God-given natural law as an underlying force in the universe stressed on moral duties than rights of individual citizens. Nonetheless, this formed the theoretical background for the emergence of the theories of natural law after fourteenth century, associated with the gradual development of modern secular territorial state.

Individual rights had no meaning in the feudal system which had a complex power structure with the different parts—the vassal, lord and king balancing one another. This delicate but enduring social balance was challenged by the assertion of an absolute divine right of the kings by James I in England in 1610. The promulgation of the doctrine of divine right led to the rise of the contract theory that paved the way for the emergence of a limited constitutional state followed by declaration of rights, the *Bill of Rights* of 1688, thus drawing out a new relationship between the state and the individual. By the end of the seventeenth century, the resistance to the capitalist developments had ceased to exist thus setting into motion, a process that witnessed economic and technical progress, rise of private enterprise and commercialization of agriculture culminating in the Industrial Revolution. It was in England that the concepts of individual rights, constitutional government, political democracy and the Industrial Revolution crystallized and developed.

Locke rejected the idea of divine right of kings and natural arrangement of political authority and advanced the notion of human equality. His theory rested on a firm and explicit moral relationship between the individual and God. Since life was a gift that God had given as a basic moral law of nature no one had the right to kill himself or destroy, rob or enslave others, as all were equal before God. The natural condition was one of freedom and equality regulated by the laws of nature.

The state of nature was not one of licence, for though the individual was free from any superior power, he was subject to the laws of nature. From the laws of nature, individuals derived the natural rights to life, liberty and estate (collectively called property). The laws of nature were known to human beings through the power of reason, which directed them towards their "proper interests". Liberty, for Locke, was not the freedom to do what one chose, but to act within the bounds of the laws of nature. Freedom presupposed order and was possible only within a

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framework of law. In the absence of law there was no freedom. Law granted freedom as it kept individuals from being subject to the arbitrary will of another person. Liberty was personal independence and thus ruled out slavery as it meant subjugation to the arbitrary will of another person: liberty was to be free from restrain and violence by others, which cannot be, where there was no law. In an explicit statement, Locke stated that freedom as the 'liberty to follow my own will in all things, where the rule prescribes not; and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man'. In a concise manner Locke offered his views of freedom: 'the freedom, then, of man and liberty of acting according to his own will is grounded on his having reason, which is able to instruct him in that law he is to govern himself by, and make him know how far he is left to the freedom of his own will'.

Locke defended personal independence and freedom as fundamental human rights. None had a right to coerce or dominate another in the state of nature. Everyone had an equal right to one's natural freedom, without being subjected to the will or authority of any other man. Locke clarified that the laws of nature were those that reason dictated. Since rights and the duty of self-preservation were derived from the laws of nature, the most important of these was the right to hold others responsible for a breach of the law and to punish them accordingly. Though Locke categorically rejected the right of a person to kill one's self, he granted the right to inflict penalties, including the death penalty, on others who had violated the laws in general, or if another person's life was threatened. Locke explicitly rejected the right of the individual to commit suicide and murder.

Locke provided the theoretical basis to the concept of natural rights. His theory had three political implications: (1) since human beings derived and enjoyed equal rights under the law of nature none were under the political authority of another without their consent; (2) the maintenance and protection of these rights was the primary function of the government; and (3) rights set and defined the limits of governmental authority. Locke's arguments were reiterated by Paine and Jefferson in the eighteenth century; the significance being the establishment of link between universality of rights and idea of constitutional liberal government. The *Declaration of the American Independence* (1776) stating that the Creator had endowed the individuals 'with certain inalienable rights' among which the most sacred is liberty and the subsequently first ten amendments to the US constitution in 1789 squashed the revival of the ancient conception of liberty made during the French Revolution of 1789, in which the individual would be subordinated to the collective whole. This resonated subsequently in all the charters on rights including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948).

Nature of Political Authority

In order to explain the origin of political power, Locke began with a description of the state of nature, which for him was one of perfect equality and freedom regulated by the laws of nature. The individual was naturally free and became a political subject out of free choice. Even after the establishment of a political society, the individual retained a private sphere where he pursued his activities and aspirations. This dichotomy between the state and society, between the private and public, was fundamental to Locke's theorizing. Since then it has become an integral part of the Western intellectual tradition (Wolin 1960: 305–309).

Locke rejected Filmer's biblical account of the origins of political power, without abandoning religious foundations. His theory rested on a firm and explicit moral relationship between the human being and God:

> For Men being all the workmanship of one Omnipotent, and infinitely wise Maker; All the servants of one Sovereign Master, sent into the World by his order and about his business, they are his Property, whose Workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's Pleasure. And being furnished with like Faculties, sharing all in one Community of Nature, there cannot be supposed any such *subordination* among

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> us, that may Authorize us to destroy one another, as if we were made for one another's uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for Ours. Every one as he is *bound to preserve himself*, and not to quit his station wilfully, so by the like reason when his own preservation comes not in competition ought be, as much as he can, *to preserve the rest of mankind* and may not unless it be to do Justice on an offender, take away, or impair the life or what tends to the Preservation of the Life, the Liberty, Health, Limb or Goods of another.

Locke saw this shared duty to God to preserve one's self as part of God's creation as the basic moral law of nature, which existed in the pre-political order or the state of nature. He tried to show that political power could be understood only if it was derived from a state in which all individuals were perfectly free to do, both with regard to their person and possessions, what they thought fit within the bounds of the laws of nature. Locke was emphatic that God had made everything for subsistence and not for waste. Even an individual's life was not his own, but was given by God as a trust, meaning we had no right to destroy or kill ourselves nor could we destroy, kill, rob or enslave other beings who were equal to us before God.

Political authority, like all moral claims, for Locke, was ultimately based on religious obligations, which were the source of all morality. His arguments were politically radical, but far from being secular (Hampsher-Monk 1992: 82). Unlike Hobbes, who argued for an unlimited right of nature that each individual could claim, Locke stressed on a natural duty of self-preservation owed to God for having created us. This duty ruled out strife, for not only did we need to preserve ourselves, but we also needed to perceive the fact that we were all equal before God. The state of nature was therefore moral. Political authority for Locke was not mere power, but *power with right*. A right could only originate from an already existing right, and because individuals had no right to give away their duty to preserve themselves they could not therefore morally or logically grant rightful power to an absolute authority. Locke viewed absolute political power as illegitimate, dismissing Filmer's arguments as wrong and wicked, for it was tantamount to giving up to another a right which one did not *have* in the first place. There was just the relationship between God and human beings. All human authority and relationships were based on trust.

The compulsion to constitute a civil society was to protect and preserve freedom and to enlarge it. The state of nature was one of liberty and equality, but it was also one where peace was not secure, being constantly upset by the "corruption and viciousness of degenerate men". It lacked three important wants: the want of an established, settled, known law; the want of a known and indifferent judge; and the want of an executive power to enforce just decisions. Through the state of nature, Locke tried to tell us the meaning and importance of authority, namely that human beings came together to ensure the observance of the laws of nature, to guarantee the greater possibility of impartiality in the implementation and execution of rules that governed common life, and thereby increase the chance of peace that impartiality entailed. Locke's observation in the beginning all the World was America' was about the formation of government in the background of people living together according to reason, without common superior on earth, in mutual assistance, peace, goodwill and preservation. It tells us what government is and what it does by showing what it is not and what it does not do.

Locke brought out the perils of human partiality, and how absolute power made partiality potentially dangerous. Flattery and servility would only make it worse. He recognized the tremendous potentiality of power for making human life better, but feared that it had to be entrusted only to those who were responsible towards those on whom it was exercised. Most societies were based on force rather than right. Locke was not an anarchist, distrusting political authority, but he was conscious of the dangers that it posed. Political authority was a trust, and if the terms of the trust were violated, the community had the right to take remedial measures in order to preserve itself. It was on these grounds that he objected to Hobbes' argument that only

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total order could provide for commodious living. It did not seem credible that people who did not trust one another would entrust an all-powerful sovereign to safeguard their interests. He found it objectionable that there were no safety measures against potential violence and oppression of this absolute ruler. "This is to think that Men are so foolish that they take care to avoid what Mischiefs may be done them by *Pole-cats*, or *Foxes*, but are content, nay think it Safety, to be devoured by Lions".

Through a contract, individuals consented to submit to majority rule and organize themselves as a community or civil society. They surrendered their powers partially, namely the three specific rights that constituted the natural right to enforce the laws of nature. Once a civil society was established, the individuals established a government to act as a judge in the nature of a "fiduciary power" for promoting certain ends. Locke described the stages as follows:

> Whosoever therefore out of a state of Nature unite into a Community must be understood to give up all the power necessary to the ends for which they unite into Society ... . And this is done by barely agreeing to unite into one Political Society, which is all the Compact that is, or needs be, between the Individuals that enter into or make up a commonwealth. And thus that which begins and actually constitutes any Political Society is nothing but the consent of any number of Freemen capable of a majority to unite and incorporate into such a society. And this is that, and that only, which did or could give beginning to any lawful Government in the world.

The community's decisions were by majority rule, unless they specifically agreed to a number greater than the majority, which Locke realized would be more difficult to muster. Though the community appointed a legislative power, it continued to retain supreme power, meaning that the people had the right to assess and evaluate the performance of the legislature. The legislature was the supreme power with a sacred duty to preserve the society. If people found the performance unsatisfactory, they could take steps to change or alter the existing body. "The Legislative being only a Fiduciary power to act for certain ends, there remains still in the People a Supreme Power to remove or alter the Legislative, when they find the Legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them".

Within the government, the legislative power was supreme since it was the representative of the people, having the power to make laws. Besides the legislature there was an executive, usually one person, with the power to enforce the law. The executive, which included the judicial power, had to be always in session. It enjoyed prerogatives and was subordinate and accountable to the legislature. The legislative and executive power had to be separate, thus pre-empting Montesquieu's theory of separation of powers. The third wing of the government was the federative power, the power to make treatises and conduct external relations. With Locke came the eclipse of the political and the identification of the political in a narrow sense with the government. Society became distinct from political arrangements and came to symbolize the whole gamut of human activities. This Lockean position is visible in the writings of the classical economists, the French Liberals and the English Utilitarians.

Locke thus advocated a limited sovereign state, for reason and experience established political absolutism as untenable. Describing the characteristics of a good state, Locke said it existed for the people who formed it, and not the vice versa. It had to be based on the consent of the people subject to the constitution and the rule of law. It would be limited, since its powers were derived from the people and were held in trust. It was also limited by natural laws and individual rights.

Locke argued that the state dealt with matters strictly political in nature, and had no warrant to interfere in domains strictly outside the political. Nor could it demand more powers on the pretext of public safety and welfare. Locke categorically asserted that supreme power resided in the people, and the people as a community had the inalienable right to institute and dismiss a government. If a government was dismissed, this did not signify a return to the state of nature, as

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it was in the case of Hobbes' theory. Moreover, the people chose to specify the powers of the government. Locke astutely observed that people at any given time would not surrender all their powers to an outside body, including their own government. Once the government was instituted, it would be assessed periodically and its actions scrutinized meticulously.

Locke also realized the impossibility of unanimity in every action, for that would imply a return to the state of nature:

> And thus every Man, by consenting with others to make one Body Politick under one Government, puts himself under an obligation to every one of that Society, to submit to the determination of the majority, and to be concluded by it; or else this original Compact, whereby he with others incorporates into one Society, would signify nothing, and be no Compact, if he be left free, and under no other ties, than he was in before in the state of Nature (Locke ibid: 376).

People accepted (and were bound by majority rule) decisions, even if they personally disagreed. Though people granted the legislative power to make law, they always retained a residual right to judge whether its performance was satisfactory and in accordance with the natural laws and take remedial steps if necessary. Hence, Locke was able to justify resistance to unjust political power.

Consent and Political Obligation

The *Second Treatise* tried to explain the basis of legitimate government and the reason why free individuals acquiesced to be subject to an external authority. The answer was simple: namely, free individuals expressed their consent willingly and voluntarily through a contract agreed freely to. As to why they agreed to enter into a civil society and establish a government, Locke explained it with reference to the state of nature.

The state of nature was not only a state of perfect freedom, but also one of perfect equality. Individuals had an equal right to natural freedom. As a true Christian, Locke believed that God created human beings and Earth. Every one had the equal right to share the earth and its fruits, since they were God's creations. Moreover, individuals were subject to the laws of nature. Each had the right to enforce the law and punish the transgressors. In the absence of common legislative, executive and judicial powers in the state of nature, there were disputes on the interpretation of law. In the absence of a common and acceptable arbitrary power, there were disturbances for it became a case of one's word against that of others. Locke, unlike Hobbes, characterized human beings as naturally social and pacific, but did not rule out the possibility of disputes among them. Hobbes used the state of nature to describe the lives of persons without political authority, whereas for Locke the state of nature:

> ... is the condition in which God himself places all men in the world, prior to the lives which they live and the societies which are fashioned by the living of these lives. What is designed to show is not what men are like but rather what rights and duties they have as the creatures of God. Their most fundamental right and duty is to judge how the God who has created them requires them to live in the world which he has also created. His requirement for all men in the state of nature is that they live according to the law of nature. Through the exercise of his reason every man has the ability to grasp the content of this law.

Like Descartes, Locke optimistically saw each individual as capable of seeking the truth for one's self. For Locke, these most basic truths began from the claim that individuals were essentially conscious beings in a world of physical matter, with which they were constantly interacting. It was through these interactions, of which the most important were our perceptions of the world, that we acquired knowledge or probable beliefs about it. An individual's conscious experience was at the root of having ideas. Locke rejected innate ideas as sources of knowledge. This implied a rejection of moral and religious truths. He never doubted the possibility of everyone reaching it.

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He questioned the existence of universal moral precepts, considering these differed throughout the world. He thought it was difficult to find any one moral rule that was universally subscribed to. Here, Locke's views were similar to the ones advanced by the Sophists. However, Locke did not pursue his moral views, though he used these arguments to underwrite his political views.

For Locke, men were by nature free, politically equal, creatures of God subject to the laws of nature, and possessors of an executive power of the laws of nature; they became subjects of political authority only by their consent. Without consent there was no political Community. Locke spoke of two kinds of consent: express or direct, and tacit consent. Express consent was an explicit commitment given at the time when the commonwealth was instituted. It was interesting that the fundamental Constitution of Carolina which Locke helped to draft, provided for a declaration of one's allegiance to the commonwealth when an individual came of age. In case there was no provision for explicit consent, people's obligation could be gauged by their tacit consent. There were two problems with regard to tacit consent. One was to define tacit consent, and the other was to determine how far it was binding. Locke provided tacit consent in response to Filmer's critique of the contract doctrine. Filmer pointed out that the idea of one contract that was irrevocable meant that subsequent generations were bound by the act of their ancestors making it indistinguishable from the argument of the royalists that God had granted Adam the right to rule which was bequeathed to Adam's heirs. Tacit consent, according to Locke, was demonstrated when:

> ... everyman, that has any possession or enjoyment of any part of the dominions of any government, does thereby give his tacit consent, and is as far forth obliged to obedience to the laws of that government, during such enjoyment, as any one under it; whether this his possession be of land, to him and his heirs forever, or a lodging only for a week; or whether it be barely travelling freely on the highway; and in effect, it reaches as far as the very being of any one within the territories of that government.

The obligation to obey the government would depend on the fact that public power was used for "peace, safety and public good of the people". Moreover, individuals would not yield to the government more power than what they actually possess in the state of nature, which meant that "there cannot be an absolute arbitrary power over their lives and fortunes which are as much possible to be preserved". Lockeian individuals were not committed to unconditional obligation. There was a rational and limited agreement which assured obedience for the preservation and enhancement of life, liberty and property. The validity of the contract would depend on the continuation of these benefits.

Locke also asserted categorically that governments could be altered, amended, changed or dissolved legitimately, and listed five occasions when this was possible. These were as follows.

1. Whenever such a prince or single person established his own arbitrary will in the place of laws.
2. When the prince hindered the legislature from assembling in its due time or from acting freely, pursuant to those ends for which it was constituted.
3. When by the arbitrary power of the prince, the elections and the ways of elections were altered without the consent, and contrary to the common interests of the people.
4. The delivery of the people into the subjection of foreign power, either by the prince or by the legislature.
5. The person who had the supreme executive power neglected laws already enacted, and could not be executed.

Locke insisted that all true states were established by consent. He assumed that a minority would consent in all things to rule by the majority. Through initial and continuing consent, Locke met the critique of Filmer by insisting that legitimate power combined power with right. A government could not be arbitrary: it was bound by the general laws which were public and not subject to

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individual decrees. All individuals would be governed by the same rules as everyone else otherwise it would violate the natural moral equality of individuals. He clarified that people could use force only against unjust and unlawful authority. The right of disobedience could be exercised by the majority, and not by one person or a small group.

Locke's insistence that there was a higher law above the law of the state became a part of modern democratic theory. It made authority transparent, accountable and subject to change for misdeeds and abuse. He was also sanguine that people would use the right of resistance and revolution wisely as their bitter medicine, and not as a daily bread. It was only when they realized that revolution would result in a better social order, that they would resort to it and not for "every little mismanagement in public affairs" or for trivial causes. Locke emphatically asserted that governments based on consent, coupled with the right of people to rebel, were the "best fence against rebellion". People had the right to judge and assess authority, which was no longer sacred or supernatural. Locke emerged as a thorough-going contractualist, unlike Hobbes whose premises were contractual but whose conclusions supported political absolutism, even though both rejected the divine right of kings and the divine origins of the state. Locke was confident that with more free communication and greater transparency there would be less need for revolution. He ruled out anarchy, and insisted on the need for a just civil authority for upholding a decent and civilized life:

> Unlike the Protestant resistance-theorists of the sixteenth century, Locke did not base his revolutionary theory upon sanctions of conscience or religion; unlike the English parliamentarians of the 1640s, he did not base it on precedents in English law; unlike Algernon Sidney, he did not base it on a metaphysical and metapsychological natural right to liberty; rather he advocated a restrained and considered revolution for the restoration of proper balance in the body politic.

Locke defended religious toleration and pluralism. In the *Letter*, he assigned the civil magistrate the duty to protect the "life, liberty and indolence of body" of the members of the commonwealth. He held the civil magistrate responsible for regulating religious practice for the peace, safety and security of his people. Though the magistrate was the ultimate judge of how to promote these ends, his judgement could not be more trustworthy, in practice, than that of any other believer. The idea was that truth could look after itself. The magistrate would ensure that other than the necessity of the state and the welfare of the people, no law was made nor were any restraints established. Any attempt to interfere with religious beliefs would be unjust, for each person was responsible for his own salvation. Locke was categorical that no one could give to another person a power that he did not have. He also ruled out religious persecution on the grounds that it could not touch the innermost thoughts, and there was no practical merit in persecuting someone who would confess under stress.

Locke excluded atheists and those religious groups that debarred others from professing and practising their beliefs from the privileges of toleration. Here he was taking a leaf from his experiences in France, where the Huguenots were severely persecuted between 1679 and 1685. The civil magistrate could legally interfere when religious assemblies endangered civil peace, but ruled out interference with a view to questioning their beliefs. Though Locke did not directly justify resistance on grounds of religion, he made it clear that oppression of any kind was intolerable and a sufficient reason for sedition.

Locke defended Christian revelation on the grounds of uncertainties of human perceptions and knowledge. Therefore, any kind of faith, even drawn from scriptural revelation and complemented by human reason, was justified. He repeatedly stressed that each individual was fully responsible for his beliefs and would have to answer God on the day of Judgement. He emphasized that civil magistrates had to be concerned with peace and preservation of society.

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Locke's work primarily justified the right of resistance, and in the last resort of revolution, against unjust authority. He repeatedly stressed that authority was legitimate if it was based on the consent of the governed. He emphasized that all authority—political and parental—was a trust, given by God. Therefore, no human being had a right over his own life, since the Christian perception categorically saw life as gifted by God, and that all human rulers could take the lives of their subjects or foreign enemies only if they had acted detrimentally towards public good. It followed that rulers had this right given by God directly and not by the subjects.

Unlike Filmer, who interpreted the rights of rulers as a personal gift from God as giving them ownership over human beings and material goods, Locke made a dear distinction between the duties of subjects to obey and the rights of rulers to command. In most societies, most of the time, the subjects had a duty to obey because civil order and peace were necessary prerequisites for a decent and civilized human existence, but the rulers had a right to command only when they deserved obedience. If they threatened civil peace and order, then the subjects had every right to judge the degree and immediacy of that threat, and could resist it if they thought it to be serious. Political authority became legitimate, and rulers had the legitimate right to command if they had provided practical services to their subjects. For Locke, the ruler became therefore a trustee, far from being an owner of the subject, thereby turning Filmer on his own head.

Parental and Patriarchal Authority

Locke distinguished political from paternal power. Individuals had the right to resist a government that was tyrannical, thus requiring him to show that subjects did not have an unconditional obligation to obey (as contended by the patriarchists), simply by virtue of their birth. He demonstrated the limits of a natural father's authority by separating parental from political authority. Parental authority was natural, not in the sense contended by patriarchists. Political power, on the contrary, was conventional.

Accepting the Christian dictum that children had to obey their parents, Locke pointed out that he was establishing parental rather than paternal authority. Since parental authority was shared, it could not be a model for the rule of an individual, as insisted by the patriarchal monarchists. Obedience towards parents was temporary till one became morally responsible. The rights of the parents were natural not because they had given birth to their children as contended by the patriarchists, but because it was their duty to take care of them and educate them till they were capable of being independent, which could be revoked if they neglected their duties. What was due to the parents was honour and not obedience. Moreover, this honour was due to both fathers and mothers and not *only* to fathers. While children honoured their parents, subjects obeyed the rulers. Inheritance was a virtual right which children had because it was the duty of the parents to not only provide for their survival, but also give them conveniences and comforts of life to the best of their ability.

Locke granted mothers an equal title with fathers to authority over their children. He specified a political role for women, enabling them to enjoy rights and powers within their homes. Mothers had a right to parental respect independent of the will of the fathers, for they had their own responsibilities towards their children. Locke granted freedom to wives from their husbands. For instance, in an unhappy marriage the wife had the liberty to leave her husband. While discussing conquests, he granted the wife property for which she had laboured. He regarded a husband's authority over his wife as derived from a contract and not from nature. He saw women as contributing to civic culture, though he did not expand nor suggest ways and means of their political activity.

Although Locke contended that natural differences between men and women were irrelevant since women were politically equal, he agreed with Filmer that the natural differences between the sexes entailed the subordination of women. He took it for granted that a husband's rule over

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his wife was a non-political form of power. He conferred on the husband the power of decision making within the family, since he was by nature physically abler and stronger. Through the marriage contract a wife accepted and consented to her domination:

> ... but a Punishment laid upon *Eve*: and if we will take them as they were directed in particular to her, as their representative to all other Women, they will at most concern the Female Sex only, and import no more but that Subjection they should ordinarily be in to their Husbands: But there is here no more Law to oblige a Woman to such a Subjection, if the Circumstances either of her Condition or Contract with her Husband should exempt her from it, then there is, that she should bring forth her Children in Sorrow and Pain, if there could be found a Remedy for it ... for the whole Verse runs thus, *unto the Woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; In sorrow thou shalt bring forth Children, and thy desire shall be to thy Husband, and he shall rule over thee*. 'Twould, I think, have been a hard matter for any Body, but our A. to have found a Grant of *Monarchical Government to Adam* in these Words ... God, in this Text, gives not, that I see, any Authority to *Adam* over *Eve*, or to Men over their Wives, but only foretels what should the Woman's Lot, how by this Providence he would order it so, that she should be subject her husband, as we see that generally the Laws of Mankind and customs of Nations have ordered it so; and there is, I grant, a Foundation in Nature for it.
>
> Thus, for Locke,
>
> although a grant of dominion to the patriarch is denied as having any basis in nature, woman's subordination to man is explained as a result of the curse laid upon Eve, the laws and traditions of mankind, and the foundation of nature. Locke in this instance is trying to have his cake and eat it. He ridicules naturalistic arguments for political society which ground patriarchalism in history, scripture, and tradition, and slips in via the Garden of Eden the notion that women's subordination within the conjugal not political, society of marriage may be understood and defended on the basis of nature.

However, in accordance with his stress on self-preservation and natural moral equality, Locke placed limits on the husband's authority, confining it to property and matters of common interest and explicitly denied a right over his wife's life or fortune. As in politics, even family life was based on the premise that individuals were free and equal under the laws of nature. The members of a family had to preserve themselves and fulfil their obligations.

Pateman (1988) pointed out that the social contract theory as developed by Hobbes and Locke did not consider women as persons or citizens with rights in the public sphere, because a tacit sexual contract preceded the social contract by which the consent of the people was elicited to decide on the terms and conditions of their governments. "The sexual contract is the vehicle through which men transform their natural right over women into the security of civil patriarchal right' (1988: 6).

Pateman pointed out that the idea of a free and equal individual which the liberal democratic theory espoused hardly existed, as it was hindered by the inequalities of class, sex and race.

In spite of giving women a political role, Locke continued to see women as mothers and as wives. He was therefore regarded as an early feminist for his considerate views and attitude towards women.

Locke replaced Filmer's absolutist patriarchal model with a liberal redefinition of patriarchal rule. For Filmer, parental authority was divine, natural and unlimited, while Locke separated family life from political authority. While a husband-wife relationship was contractual and therefore voluntary, a parent-child relationship was natural but limited and conditional. The family was needed for procreation of the human race and education of the young.

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Property

The theory of property was an important theme in Locke's political philosophy. Like Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694), he pointed out that by human reason and by revelation it was apparent that the earth and its fruits belonged to God, and that God had given them to the human inhabitants in common to enjoy. He tried to answer Filmer's critique of Grotius regarding how individuals could have a private right to any part of a common heritage. He dismissed Filmer's argument that God had given the earth and its fruits "to Adam and his heirs exclusively. More than this, he also argued that it was human labour which distinguished what was privately owned from what was commonly held. Labour was the unquestioned property of the labourer, and by mixing his labour with a piece of land, an individual acquired the right to whatever he had made of that material. The stress was on what human beings made of the earth, how and what they left for posterity. He insisted God had given human beings the earth to make it a better place, full of conveniences of life by entrepreneurship, hard work and reason. It was for "fancy, covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious". Here also, Locke emphasized that human beings were trustees, stewards who could appropriate and consume by being industrious and creative without wasting, squandering, spoiling or destroying. The philosophy of Puritan ethics pervaded the entire thought of Locke.

In the state of nature, individuals had initially a right to appropriation which was limited to three things. An individual could appropriate only that much for which one had a need, and provided enough and good was left for others. An individual had a right only to that much for which he had mixed the labour of his body and the work of his hand. Labour not only created property but also determined its value. It was labour that made the world different by creating conveniences and increasing productivity. For instance, America, a land of plenty, did not have the conveniences that the seventeenth-century England enjoyed. Locke assumed that scarcity was not a problem, for there was enough for all to find satisfaction, thereby, setting aside the problem of limited means and unlimited human desires.

Locke spoke of individuals in the state of nature having perfect freedom to dispose of their possessions, and persons, as they thought fit. He emphatically clarified that since property was a natural right derived from natural law, it was therefore prior to the government. He emphasized that individuals had rights to do as they pleased within the bounds of the laws of nature. Rights were limited to the extent that they did not harm themselves or others.

The limited right of appropriation and equality of possessions in the state of nature was distorted with the introduction of money. This was because one could possess more regardless of the use of the product, and hoard without injuring anyone. Money also divorced right from convenience. Locke's attitude to the emerging commercial society was ambivalent. He did not reconcile the injunctions within natural law which emphasized equality of property with the inequality of unlimited accumulation which was made possible because of the introduction of money.

Locke assumed the existence of a vibrant economy and civil society prior to the creation of any government. This was to emphasize, which later became the cornerstone of the liberal argument, that civil society was independent of political authority, that economic activity as opposed to politics was more important and that there was a need to separate the private from the public sphere:

> ... Locke initiated a way of thinking in which society, rather than the political order, was the predominant influence. Instead of asking the traditional question: what type of political order is required if society is to be maintained? Locke turned the question around to read, what social arrangements will insure the continuity of government? Locke launched his attack against the traditional model of society, wherein ordered social relationships and institutions were sustained by the direction imparted from a political centre, by substituting a conception of society as a self-activating unity capable of generating a common will.

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Through the discussions on property, Locke stated that it represented human entitlements and in fact "the great and chief end of men's uniting into commonwealth and putting themselves under government is the preservation" and protection of their property. The purpose of government was to secure human entitlements and ensure lives, liberties and the material possessions of all human beings. Even if the commonwealth was based on freely elected representatives, it could not dispose of the property of its subjects arbitrarily. "The connection between property and the supportive role of society lies in Locke's identification of property with society rather than with the political order".

It was the social character of property that enabled Locke to defend a minimal state with limited government and individual rights, and reject outright the hereditary principle of government. He was willing to defend entitlements that were directly acquired through one's labour, and avoided the issue of inheritance or transactions as gifts.

Locke also wanted to emphasize that no government could deprive an individual of his material possessions without the latter's consent. It was the duty of political power to protect entitlements that individuals enjoyed by virtue of the fact that these had been given by God. It was for the protection of liberties and property that they entered into an agreement instructing the government to recognize these rights and embody them in a statutory form. Since the state was created for the sole protection of property, consequently no part or the whole of the individual's property could be taken without the individual's consent. Besides, no taxes could be levied without the consent of the individual, otherwise it invaded the fundamental right to property and subverted the ends of the government. The American slogan "No taxes without representation" during the Boston Tea Party was typically Lockeian in spirit and content.

Macpherson argued that Locke's views on property made him a bourgeois apologist, a defender of the privileges of the possessing classes. "With the removal of the two initial limitations which Locke had explicitly recognized, the whole theory of property is a justification of the natural right not only to unequal property but to unlimited individual justification".

As a result, there was a divorce between appropriating and labouring. Simultaneously, Locke also justified and defended class differentials in rights and rationality and wage contracts, in the process becoming a spokesman for a market society providing the moral basis for capitalist society (Macpherson ibid). From a society of equal individuals, Locke accepted two classes with different rights, those with and those without property.

Macpherson's arguments were challenged by Dunn (1968b: 54-58), Laslett (1960: 114-119) and Tully (1980: 150-155), who found it difficult to accept Locke as a spokesman of capitalism. Wood (1984: 101-105) saw Macpherson as distorting history, for Locke could at best be seen as a spokesman of agrarian capitalism. The important fact was that agriculture still dominated the economic scene in the late seventeenth century. Landed property was the main source of wealth, power and social position. Mercantile and manufacturing capitalism on the other hand were still in their embryonic stages. A semblance of market relations had begun to appear but was restricted. Locke's stress on the importance of labour and industry for higher productivity became apparent during the Enclosure movement. The Enclosure movement protested against confiscation of land without the consent of the individual owner. Land was the chief source of wealth and its enclosure increased its yield. Moreover the capitalist landlord could sequestrate the benefits. Not only did Locke have the example of the American colonists in mind but also the "superior productivity of private agricultural economy as compared with the communal tillage of a more primitive system" (Sabine 1973: 486). The claim to land as property without harming anyone else was became an established fact during the Enclosure movement. Moreover, the contention by Macpherson that Locke presumed wage slavery in his conception of property was rejected by Ebenstein, who pointed out that Locke used the term "property" in the broad sense for liberating one's self rather than for enslaving others. For him, as it was with the early liberals, property had a moral dimension. It conveyed independence of the person and possessions.

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By making labour the title to property and the source of value, Locke translated the rise of a new class to power in terms of a new political economy. Although himself a mercantilist, Locke's economic philosophy helped to liberate the ingenious and industrious entrepreneur from paralyzing force and custom (Ebenstein 1969: 390).

Ryan (1965: 220, 228-230) maintained that Macpherson frequently ignored what Locke was saying in the text. Far from creating a political society in which the bourgeois class dominated the working class, as Macpherson claimed, Locke was attempting to prove that everyone shared a common interest in a constitutionally established political society. Dunn (1968b: 68-70) contended that Locke was concerned with questions of social justice. In Locke's under-standing, justice was linked to ownership of property on the one hand and the laws of nature as the will of God on the other hand. The individual's interest in property was constrained by the duty he owed to God. Tully (1980: 150-151) in a similar vein argued that through the concept of property, Locke tried to provide the foundations of economic justice. It raised questions like what a just distribution of the products of labour was, to what extent labour power was to be regulated, and whether labour could be organized without exploitation.

Self-Assessment

Choose the correct option:

1. The reasonableness of christianity was published in ..... .
   (*i*) 1695 (*ii*) 1660 (*iii*) 1690 (*iv*) 1692
2. The theory of ..... was an important theme in Locke's political philosophy.
   (*i*) race (*ii*) sex (*iii*) property (*iv*) politics
3. The first Treatise could have been written during ..... .
   (*i*) 1681–1682 (*ii*) 1685–1686 (*iii*) 1683–1684 (*iv*) 1680–1681
4. The execution of ..... brought about a breach in the monarchial tradition.
   (*i*) Charles II (*ii*) Charles I (*iii*) James II (*iv*) None of these.

7.4 Summary

- Locke was one of the most controversial and influential theorists in the entire history of political thought. He wrote on epistemology, natural law, economics, political theory, education, toleration and theology, making a difference to the intellectual world more than anybody else since Aristotle. His ideas shaped the Enlightenment and the modern world. "The heirs of Locke are, first, Berekely and Hume; second, those of the French *philosophes* who did not belong to the school of Rousseau; third, and the philosophical Radicals; fourth, with important accretions from Continental philosophy, Marx and his disciples".
- Locke's notion of property gave rise to some serious criticism, though such criticism normally ignored the libertarian aspect of early liberalism, for property was linked to the idea of equality and self-sufficiency. Locke's emphases on constitutionalism, consent and toleration have been integral components of modern political theory. Locke was also the first exponent of the doctrine of civil society. Benefit and contract were synonymous, leading to his formulation of a conception of government as a trust. Locke also expressed faith in the ordinary man when he conceded a right to rebellion, making people the ultimate and final arbiters of the government's accountability. The radical dimension of this formulation could be gauged from the fact that even a century after Locke, Burke was not even prepared to grant proper democratic representation, and argued for *virtual representation*. If this historic context is kept in mind, then the enormous significance of Locke's libertarianism becomes

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apparent. To be a champion of individual freedom and extension of democracy before the inauguration of the age of democracy was no small achievement, and in achieving this, Locke immortalized himself.

- Locke's political theory addressed four problems: (*a*) the nature of political power at a time when the nation states were consolidating their status; (*b*) a proper relationship between religion and politics, and between the Church and the state; (*c*) actual practice of governing in the early mercantile period; and (*d*) types of knowledge appropriate to religious and political theory. Locke's theory represented a fundamental shift in intellectual and political consciousness, deflecting subjects from the notions of duty and obedience vis-a-vis their rulers, towards rights and the idea that a government was entitled to their affection and loyalty only if it could successfully provide defined services. He established the dignity of the individual by making a case for both natural and political equality, for God would never accept absolutism— political and parental—as that would imply abdication of one's duty towards self-preservation and freedom. His views on toleration shaped the liberal theory, emphasizing the need to separate religion from the political, the importance of belief, and the injustice in persecution and intolerance.
- One of the most important perceptions of America was that it was a nation of Lockeian individualism. Locke was often described as America's philosopher-king. His influence was so pervasive that it was seen as a self-evident truth. Louis Hartz's influential work *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955) endorsed this view. However, this predominant view has been questioned by some recent revisionist scholars like Bailyn, Pocock and Gordon Wood, who emphasized a more communitarian origin of American political tradition. One such crucial influence was the civic republican traditions of ancient Greece and Rome and sixteenth-century Florence, manifested in the preservation of virtue and public involvement in civic affairs. But it is generally agreed that such a view was a distortion of Locke's views. It was also a caricature of Locke, portraying him as a possessive individualist. Locke was not for merely maximizing interest. His emphasis was more on human virtues and excellence. His concerns, significant in themselves, were justice, courage, self-sacrifice, humanity, industry and truthfulness, qualities of human character appropriate for a new liberal order. He
- constructs modem moral virtues, including civility, liberality, justice and humanity, on the basis of his egoistic and hedonistic psychology .... To understand this view of human life as an entirely degraded one, bereft of any dignity, is to do an injustice not only to Locke but to liberalism and ourselves (Tarcov 1984: 210).
- Locke was the product at the turning point of English history. The Newtonian revolution in science convinced him of the need for a new philosophy. The intellectual temper of England allowed complete independence in the realm of philosophical speculation. Locke did not make a secret of his debt to Descartes, and with his genius grasped the spirit of this new age. He became the philosopher of this new age.
- If we list out the items that constitute the liberal world-view: individualism, freedom, consensual limited government, minimal state, constitutional authority, the rule of law, the majority rule principle, separation of powers, sovereignty of the people, representative democracy, property rights, civil society, pluralism, tolerance and the right to judge authority, then Locke is the founding father of liberal political theory. Subsequent liberal theorists have worked within the framework that Locke provided. The ideological triumph of liberalism in the twentieth century over its rivals, Communism and Fascism, prove that the Lockeian insights developed in the context of late seventeenth-century England proved to be the most enduring and satisfying framework among all the competing political ideologies of the last four hundred years.

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7.5 Key-Words

1. Contractualism : It is a theory of Justice centred around the propositions that political decisions are justifiable only to the extent they are coherent with uncoered agreements between moral agents.
2. Utilitarians : It is a theory in normative ethics holding that the proper course of action is the one that maximizes overall happiness.
3. Patriarchy : Patriarchy is totally means "rule of fathers, from the Greek patriarkhēs, father or chief of a race, patriarch, Historically, the term Historiarchy was used to refer to autocratic rule by the male head of a family. However, in modern times, it more generally refers to social systems in which power is primarily held by adult men."

7.6 Review Questions

1. Critically examine the limitations on the ownership of property as defined by Locke.
2. Write a short note on John Locke's ideas on consent, resistance and toleration.
3. What were Locke's views on sovereignty?
4. Discuss Locke's social contract theory.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) 2. (*iii*) 3. (*i*) 4. (*ii*)

7.7 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Unit 8: Jean Jacques Rousseau

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Examine critique by civil society.
- Discuss the Rousseau's theory of general will
- Describe Rousseau's life and his work.
- Explain social contract of Rousseau.

Introduction

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was the greatest thinker that the French produced. In the entire history of political theory, he was the most exciting and most provocative. By the very magic of his style, no other political thinker could come anywhere near him. He was a genius and a keen moralist who was ruthless in his criticism of eighteenth-century French society. He was one of the most controversial thinkers, as evident from the conflicting, contradictory and often diametrically opposite interpretations that existed of the nature and importance of his ideas.

"His philosophy is highly personal, an expression of his own fierce insistence on independence and liberty, but at the same time, paradoxical and complex". Pointing to the volatile implications of his prescriptions, Madame de Stael commented that his new ideas set everything ablaze.

> ... Rousseau ... who was the first of the modern intellectuals, their archetype and in many ways the most influential of them all. Older men like Voltaire had started the work of demolishing the altars and enthroning reason. But Rousseau was the first to

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> combine all the salient characteristics of the modern Promethean: the assertion of his right to reject the existing order in its entirety; confidence in his capacity to refashion it from the bottom in accordance with principles of his own devising; belief that this could be achieved by the political process; and, not least, recognition of the huge part instinct, institutions and impulse play in human conduct.

To some, Rousseau appeared as a great champion of individualism. Others viewed him as a collectivist. Many like Cassirer saw him as an incomparable democrat who recognized autonomy, though some like Cobban, Talmon and Taylor viewed him as a precursor of modern totalitarianism. Crocker and Lindsay viewed him as a believer in guided democracy while Popper described him as a romantic collectivist.

To many, he was an advocate of revolutionary changes while others regarded him as a defendant of the status quo. The early socialists, with the exception of Jean B.C. Louis Blanc (1811-1882) and the Saint Simonians like Saint Armand Bazard (1791-1832) and Barthelemy Prosper Enfantin (1796-1864), were uncomfortable with his individualism. His name had been associated with the German Idealists who regarded him as the originator of their political system. Kant praised Rousseau for stating in clear terms the limits of the intellect and emphasizing the importance of immediate sensation. He credited him for teaching him to honour human beings. This divergence in interpretation was due to the ambiguous nature of his theory, making it possible to interpret him in many different ways. "One could always find one's dogma in Rousseau, whether one belongs to the left or to the 'Left of Left' or to right or to the 'Right of Right'".

Rousseau made a passionate appeal for human equality. Paradoxically, the greatest mind of the Enlightenment had nothing in common with his contemporaries. As a political moralist and a constitution builder, he made Utopian demands. In the *Discourses on Origins of Inequality* (1755) he described how contemporary society fell short of civilized standards. In the *Social Contract* (1762) he stipulated and portrayed a decent and humane society. While the former diagnosed the disease, the latter gave remedies and cures. He mainly focused on whether human beings could enjoy both civilization and freedom, society and moral integrity. He propounded the notion of General Will as the real basis of legitimate power and authority. He highlighted the importance of realizing freedom in the modern age, and pointed to the problems of reconciling freedom with claims of authority. He attempted to reconcile merit, liberty and equality in a society that would be consensual, participatory and democratic. In fact, one would have to read both these works together to understand the full implication of his ideas. The *Social Contract* was a part of a larger work, *Institutions Politiques,* which he conceived in 1744 but abandoned and began to write the *Emile* (1762). Rousseau wrote on institutional arrangements and educational practice as reflected in his works like *Project of a Constitution for Corsica* (1764), *Considerations on the Government of Poland* (1772) and the *Emile*. The last one was strongly disapproved of by the city leadership of Geneva, making Rousseau renounce his citizenship. He sent a rejoinder in the form of *Letters From the Mountain.*

In 1750, Rousseau became famous by winning an essay competition with his *Discourse on the Science and the Arts,* in which he had stated that "our souls have been corrupted in proportion to the advancement of our sciences and our arts toward perfection". Here, he extended the arguments of Machiavelli and Montesquieu about the relationship between luxury and affluence, growth, moral decline and loss of human liberty. Rousseau's severe criticism of luxury and artificiality, rejection of sophistication, and his endorsement of simplicity, and emphasis on natural behaviour, angered his contemporaries. He believed that the arts and sciences originated in human vices as masks to conceal and rationalize human depravity. Contrary to what the Enlightenment professed, progress in the material sense only increased our dependence on commodities, thereby increasing our wants and undermining our natural independence. The less was the desire, the more the

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freedom. He defended simplicity, innocence, poverty and virtue as opposed to refinement, wit, wealth and decadence. In many respects, Rousseau's theory had a striking resemblance to the subsequent indictment by Gandhi of modern Westernized, materialistic and technological civilization.

Plato exerted a strong and powerful influence on Rousseau, leading to the revival of the influence of the classical tradition in political philosophy.

What Rousseau got from Plato was a general outlook. It included, first, the conviction that political subjection is essentially ethical and only secondarily a matter of law and power. Second and more important, he took from Plato the presumption, implicit in all the philosophy of the city state, that the community is itself the chief moralizing agency and therefore represents the highest moral value.

8.1 Life Sketch

Rousseau was born on June 28, 1712 in the city of Geneva. During his lifetime, he accomplished many things including mastery in and writing on music, politics and education. His fame primarily rested on his writings. His father was a watchmaker. His mother's death within a month of his birth disintegrated the family. His parents were Protestants, but Rousseau got converted to Catholicism under the influence of Madame de Warens. He subsequently became Warens' lover. He led the life of a vagabond, and only after many years did he begin to educate himself. His *Confessions* provide the details of his life.

At the age of 30, Rousseau went to Paris and befriended Diderot. The latter's *Encyclopedia* included some of Rousseau's writings on music. From 1743 to 1744, Rousseau became the secretary to the French ambassador in Venice. He developed an intimate relationship with Therese le Vasseur in 1745, who subsequently became the mother of his five children. All his children were abandoned in an orphanage. He married Therese much later. His eccentric, egoistic and overbearing personality made him sever his friendships with his former friends Diderot, Hume and Voltaire.

In the *Discourses*, he traced the rise of inequality and the consequent fall of the human individual. The *Discourses* was dedicated to the natives of Geneva, a city that had left an indelible influence. In the novel *La Nouvelle Heloise* (1761), the themes of his early essays reappeared, and his preference for nature and the simple pleasures of country life became evident. His *Confessions* published posthumously and his *Reveries d'un Promeneur Solitaire* contained idyllic descriptions of the beauty and serenity of the country's natural surroundings. It also had beautiful portrayals of the lakes of Switzerland and the foothills of the Alps.

Rousseau also composed operas. One of his short operas, *Le Devin du Village (The Village Soothsayer)* was performed for the first time in Paris on March 1, 1753. It proved to be an instant hit. Even the king of France, despite being tone-deaf, was overheard trying to hum its melodies. Rousseau's music remained the mainstay of the Paris opera for years to come. He also wrote a dictionary of music and devised a new system of musical notation. He was persecuted for religious reasons. The *Social Contract* and the *Emile* were burned both in Paris and Geneva. Facing the threat of imprisonment, Rousseau went into hiding. He died in 1778.

Did u know? Rousseau attained fame with his prize-winning essay *Discourse on the Science and Arts,* in which he rejected progress based on the arts and sciences, as it did not elevate the moral standards of human beings.

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8.2 Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was described as the Age of Reason. It was a period when thinkers did not establish any particular mode of philosophical speculation, but agreed on many fundamental issues. These were placing indomitable faith in the idea of progress, the need to apply scientific methods, and perceiving reason to be the best guide available for conducting life. The Enlightenment refers to the series of dramatic revolutions in science, philosophy and politics took place in European thought and culture from the mid-seventeenth century through the eighteenth century. It culminates with the French Revolution which saw the violent destruction of the traditional hierarchical, political and social orders—the French monarchy, the privileges of the French Aristocracy and the political power and authority of the Catholic Church and replaced by a new political and social order based on the principles of human rationality, freedom and equality of all. Its roots lay in the scientific revolution ushered in by Copernicus and Galileo. Peter Gay observed that the Enlightenment broke through the dogma of 'the sacred circle', an interdependent relationship between the hereditary aristocracy, the leaders of the church and the text of the bible that had circumscribed thinking. The church sanctioned the rule of the king with whose help the notion of 'divine right of kings' was invoked and the king, in return, defended the church. The Enlightenment was associated with the French thinkers—Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, Montesquieu, and others called *philosophes.* In addition to the French Enlightenment were the Scottish Enlightenment—Hutcheson, Hume, Smith and Reid and the German Enlightenment that included Christian Wolff, Moses Mendelssohn, G.E. Lessing, Leibniz, Goethe and Kant.

The basic idea underlying all the tendencies of enlightenment was the conviction that human understanding is capable, by its own power and without any recourse to super-natural assistance, of comprehending the system of the world and that this new way of understanding the world will lead to a new way of mastering it (Cassirer 1937: Vol. 5).

Rousseau, a product of the Enlightenment, was aware of these developments. What differentiated him from his contemporaries was his contempt for knowledge, and his strong conviction of its uselessness in explaining the individual's political conduct. He specifically gave a call for discarding "all those scientific books" by asserting that,

... these vain and futile declaimers (the philosophers) go forth on sides, armed with their fatal paradoxes, to sap the foundations of our faith and nullify virtue. They smile contemptuously at such old names as patriotism and religion, and consecrate their talents and philosophy to the destruction and defamation of all that men hold sacred (Rousseau 1958: 131-132).

Rousseau protested against intelligence, science and reason, insofar as they destroyed reverence, faith and moral intuition, the factors on which society was based. His protest was a "revolt against reason", for he regarded the "thinking animal as a depraved animal" (Sabine 1973: 530-531). His conviction was reflected by his unhappiness with Grotius, because "his usual method of reasoning is constantly to establish right by force". Rousseau rejected the progressive effects of the power and clarity of reason. Reason might enable individuals to overcome their ignorance, but made them skeptics. It tempered one's chauvinism to the point of destroying one's patriotic sense. It suppressed and distorted natural responses like sympathy and pity. He doubted whether the human mind could be fashioned through education, cultivation of fine manners and a benevolent disposition. He was not optimistic about social reforms in eighteenth-century France.

For Rousseau, arts, manners and politeness not only destroyed martial virtues, but also denied human nature, forcing individuals to conceal "their real selves". In modern society, he observed that happiness was built on the opinions of others, rather than finding it in one's own hearts. Art highlighted this truth, for it was deceitful. The origin of art and sciences was in idleness and the desire for distinction among human beings.

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Rousseau implied the irreversibility of the process of corruption in the same way as the process of civilization, which was irreversible. There were two reasons for this. The first was geopolitical. Like Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), Rousseau accounted for renewal of virtue and the destruction of corrupt imperial societies through their conquests by barbarians on the edges of civilization. The second reason was linked to Rousseau's assessment of history and social development in moral terms. In his unpublished *Essay on Wealth,* he tried to see the effects of a nexus between wealth and poverty on the moral person. He dismissed modern society as false and artificial, for it destroyed natural and true culture. The problem remained about what was perceived as natural, and how to answer the question of what was natural.

8.3 Rousseau's Political Philosophy

In Rousseau's view, the most fundamental relationship of the human individual was with the society, though the original person lived in a state of nature which was pre-social and pre-political. In spite of his idealization of the state of nature, there was no going back to it, and because of this an examination of what the human person was like in the state of nature, what had become of him as a result of the pernicious process of civil society and the nature of the ideal society, were important questions. He noted the wide differences that existed between the civilized and the natural person.

In a state of nature, the individual was guided by instinct and not by reason. He differed from animals only because he possessed a will and the desire for perfectibility. The basic interest of Rousseau's natural person was very similar to that of Hobbes, as both were guided by a primary need and compulsion of life, namely self-preservation. The difference lay with regard to the state of nature. In the case of Hobbes, this primary need was constantly under threat, whereas for Rousseau:

The more we reflect on it, the more we shall find that this state was the least subject to revolutions, and altogether the very best man could experience, so that he can have departed from it only through some fatal accident, which, for the public good, should never have happened. The example of savages, most of whom have been found in this state, seems to prove that men were meant to remain in it, that is the real youth of the world, and that all subsequent advances have been apparently so many steps towards the perfection of the individual, but in reality towards the decrepitude of his species (Rousseau 1958: 198-199).

The youth of the world, as Rousseau described this period of the state of nature, was a time when human beings (noble savage) were equal—or more appropriately, unequal—as he mentioned the distinct possibility of some inequalities in this period. Interestingly, even in Hobbes' writings the word 'savage' found mention. It was the discovery of America and with it its 'savage people' that influenced the writers of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The most important thing that he emphasized was that these inequalities did not hinder the independence and self-sufficiency of humans, as they could continue to lead "free, healthy, honest and happy lives" (Rousseau ibid: 199). The rise of civilization was attributed to human beings' discovery of metals and agriculture, bringing in division and specialization of labour. It was linked to the institution of private property.

Rousseau did not see reason as an innate quality in the individual. It was mostly dormant until a situation arose in which it was needed. The natural person was able to fulfil his needs without much assistance from reason. A happy individual was not much of a thinking being. Reason, for Rousseau, was an instrument to attain ends, and if one's ends were satisfied effortlessly, then it played a marginal role. The natural person had limited physical desires, but the moment he reasoned, the range of desires also increased, causing him to think about his desires increasingly. The appetite of a rational person was unlimited. Since happiness was dependent on satisfaction of desires, a rational person remained miserable. Reason created artificial and false needs. It was not merely the satisfaction of needs, but also the desire to be a certain kind of person that entailed

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problems. The natural person ceased to be happy, peaceful and became dependent and miserable, losing both natural equality and innocence. The natural person did not lose his compassion, but the feeling got subsumed under reason.

Reason is what engenders egocentrism and reflection strengthens it. Reason is what turns man in upon himself ... . Philosophy is what isolates him and what moves him to say in secret at the sight of a suffering man, "Perish if you will; I am safe and sound" (Rousseau ibid: 199).

8.4 Social Contract

The Social Contract is, like the Discourse on Political Economy, a work that is more philosophically constructive than either of the first two Discourses. Furthermore, the language used in the first and second Discourses is crafted in such a way as to make them appealing to the public, whereas the tone of the Social Contract is not nearly as eloquent and romantic. Another more obvious difference is that the Social Contract was not nearly as well-received; it was immediately banned by Paris authorities. And although the first two Discourses were, at the time of their publication, very popular, they are not philosophically systematic. The Social Contract, by contrast, is quite systematic and outlines how a government could exist in such a way that it protects the equality and character of its citizens. But although Rousseau's project is different in scope in the Social Contract than it was in the first two Discourses, it would be a mistake to say that there is no philosophical connection between them. For the earlier works discuss the problems in civil society as well as the historical progression that has led to them. The Discourse on the Sciences and Arts claims that society has become such that no emphasis is put on the importance of virtue and morality. The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality traces the history of human beings from the pure state of nature through the institution of a specious social contract that results in present day civil society. The Social Contract does not deny any of these criticisms. In fact, chapter one begins with one of Rousseau's most famous quotes, which echoes the claims of his earlier works: "Man was/is born free; and everywhere he is in chains." But unlike the first two Discourses, the Social Contract looks forward, and explores the potential for moving from the specious social contract to a legitimate one.

8.5 Analysis of Inequality

In the *Discourses,* Rousseau provided the moral foundations of his social criticism and explored the basis of natural rights by tracing the source of moral values to natural equality and compassion that could be found among individuals. He described the natural person as some kind of a dumb animal. Rejecting the notion of the original sin, he contended that human beings came into this world as pure and good beings, but in the process got corrupted, tarnished, disfigured and degraded by society. This constituted his main point of enquiry.

Rousseau demonstrated how humans who were naturally healthy, good, dumb and roughly equal to one another became sickly, evil, intelligent and highly unequal when they mixed in society. The greatest horror of modern society was the fact that it was a highly unequal one. Having provided the reasons for the "fall" of the human being, his verdict on behalf of modern society was essentially negative. He concluded that for all their efforts, human beings had only succeeded in making themselves miserable.

Rousseau described the human person as endowed with the ability to choose since he was a free agent and not entirely subject to instinct and natural impulse, as other animals were. Moreover, the human being was capable of being perfect, which enabled him to come out of the state of nature, but in the process created an imbalance between one's needs and the ability to satisfy them. Civilization had multiplied the desire for needs, but the inability to fulfil them made human beings unhappy. Rousseau did not see material progress ushered in by modern technology as

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constituting civility and happiness. Modern civilization was highly unequal, as it did not reflect merely natural, but also artificial inequalities, and hence was corrupting and wrong. Rousseau's argument that acquisition of property caused inequality was implicitly challenged by Smith in his *The Wealth of Nations* when he pointed out that the self-interested individual unintentionally helped to maximize the wealth of society. In another passage in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) Smith pointed out that the self-interested individual unintentionally helped to distribute wealth more widely so as to approach equality. Smith also observed that all occupations, if different degrees of reward were balanced against different degrees of toil and trouble, would yield an equal amount of welfare.

Rousseau was an advocate of approximate social equality but not *total* equality. He was willing to permit two sorts of inequality. The first was the natural inequality between the young and old, the weak and strong, the wise and stupid; the second was the inequality that resulted from rewarding those who rendered special service to the community. Natural inequalities and those who made distinguished contributions to society were the only types of inequalities that he permitted. He maintained that existing social inequality did not belong to these types.

Rousseau rejected the idea that social inequalities reflected natural inequalities of talents. It was ridiculous to think that the rich were vastly wealthier than the rest of the population, because they were infinitely more gifted and talented. The real reason was the unscrupulous business practices that they and their ancestors had employed. The same was the case with the powerful. He repudiated differences in ability as the sole justification for social inequalities. Instead, he pointed out how human beings climbed over one another to get to the top. Social equality implied equality of opportunity. While in a capitalist society wealth was used to secure benefits, in a communist society it was power and prestige that conferred privileges. He rejected both these principles of distribution. He ruled out the principle of egalitarianism as a levelling one, as he did not obliterate distinct individual endowments. He wanted society to take these into account and conform to them (Colletti 1969: 190, 192). The basis of natural right was not human reason, but human sensitivity. It was healthy self-interest and pity or compassion that prevented individuals from harming one another, except in legitimate self-defence.

Rousseau saw a direct link between luxury, ever-expanding needs and the rise of art and science, after which true courage failed and virtues declined. Roman history elucidated this argument fully. As long as Rome was poor and simple, it was able to command respect and establish an empire. But the moment it became wealthy, its decline began. Rousseau similarly thought Sparta to be a better example in the cult of natural simplicity than Athens; the latter had to decline because of its elegance, luxury, wealth, art and science. He castigated philosophers for desecrating all that was sacred, and called them charlatans for creating confusion in the minds of men and undermining their ideas of patriotism and religion.

8.6 Institution of Private Property

This state of affairs, a period of ideal bliss and happiness, disappeared with the emergence of private property. In the cases of both Hobbes and Rousseau, the institution of property was absent in the state of nature. But in spite of this similarity, there were important differences in their writings on the emergence of civil society.

For Hobbes, the primary and original purpose of civil society was to make secure the right of self-preservation, the right to life, whereas for Rousseau, since the human person in the state of nature was instinctively good, life as such was not threatened, and as a consequence civil society emerged not for its preservation, but for the protection of the property of a few. In this way civil society was created for the selfish interests of a few people, whereas for Hobbes the need for a civil society was more universal, since life was dear to all, and everybody without any exception would compose the commonwealth for security.

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In the case of Rousseau, property was the only artificial right or privilege that emerged in society, and this right belonged to a few. The institutionalization of property rights put an end to the self-sufficiency that existed in the state of nature, bringing misery to the majority:

> But from the moment one man began to stand in need of the help of another; from the moment it appeared advantageous to any one man to have enough provisions for two, equality too disappeared, property was introduced, for work became indispensable, and vast forests became smiling fields, which man had to water with the sweat of his brow, and where slavery and misery were soon seem to germinate and grow up with crops.

Rousseau was not attempting to paint a picture of the evolution of civil society in stages by chronological events. He explained that these investigations were not "considered as historical truths, but only as mere conditional and hypothetical reasonings, rather calculated to explain the nature of things, than to ascertain their actual origin".

The change from the state of nature to that of civil society was abrupt. It emerged when,

> the First man, who having enclosed a piece of ground, he thought himself of saying "This is mine" and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, of filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: "Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody".

In Rousseau's ideal, a golden mean between the primitive state of nature and his own contemporary times would emerge. There would be no division of labour. This was akin to the Marxist Utopia. Each would be able to meet one's own needs by one's own efforts. The moment a person became dependent on the other, he lost his independence and autonomy. Human beings not only compared themselves materially, but also liked *others* to recognize them as superior. Not only did property create social dissensions, but it also brought forth new kinds of mutual dependence between the rich and the poor. The rich needed the services of the poor, and the poor required the help of the rich. The distinctions increased and became sharper. The poor coveted the property of the rich, and the rich feared losing it, leading to a state of war similar to the one described by Hobbes. The *Discourses:*

> ... attempted to draw upon the anthropological knowledge ... in order to reconstruct systematically the origins of private property and to show how it caused the evils of society to evolve. His (Rousseau's) anthropology was not sound, but his way of looking at social questions in historical terms was full of possibilities for the future. Babeuf inherited this primitive historical consciousness, which later developed into a fundamental element in the revolutionary outlook during the nineteenth century.

However, Rousseau, unlike the socialists, did not advocate common ownership of property or the means of production. He regarded property as the most sacred of all citizens' rights:

> But he had no serious idea of abolishing property and no very definite idea about its place in the community. What Rousseau contributed to socialism, Utopian or other, was the much more general idea that all rights, including those of property, are rights within the community and not against it.

Rousseau's ideal, however, was an economic system based on small farmers owning tracts of land. He opposed the sharp distinctions that property ownership entailed. In this sense he could be regarded as a spiritual forerunner of modern socialism, for his perception that property was the source of misery and inequality. His indictment of property, like that of Plato, was on moral grounds.

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8.7 Civil Society

Rousseau, like Hobbes, failed to provide a logical answer to explain the transformation of human instinct into reason, except that change was abrupt, brought into existence by the will and effort of a few individuals. There would be no going back to the state of nature. Society was accepted as inevitable, for human life was not possible without it. He spoke of a golden past with virtually no hope of recapturing it. In the *Emile,* he distinguished between the state of nature and civil society and stated his preference for the latter:

> Oh! Emile, where is the man who owes nothing to the land in which he lives? Whatever that land may be, he owes to it the most precious thing possessed by man, the morality of his actions and the love of virtue. Born in the depths of a forest he would have lived in greater happiness and freedom; but being able to follow his inclinations without a struggle there would have been no merit in his goodness, he would not have been virtuous, as may be of his passions. The mere sight of order teaches him to know and love it. The public good, which to others is a mere pretext, is a real motive for him. He learns to fight against himself and to prevail, to sacrifice his own interest to the common weal. It is not true that he gains nothing from the laws; they give him courage to be just, even in the midst of the wicked. It is not true that they have failed to make him free; they have taught him to rule himself.

This statement by Rousseau explained his outline of civil society, which was elaborated and developed in the *Social Contract.* In the state of nature the individual was guided by instincts of self-preservation and compassion. While all living creatures shared these qualities, the difference was in the fact that in others these were instinctive, whereas in individuals it was subject to their will:

> Nature lays her commands on every animal, and the brute obeys her voice. Man receives the same impulsion, but at the same time knows himself at liberty to acquiesce or resist: and it is particularly in his consciousness of this liberty that the spirituality of his soul is displayed.

It was because human beings were endowed with a will that they were different from other animals. However, its presence did not destroy their instinctive goodness. Two things followed from this presumption. First, though civilization had a corrupting influence on the individual, the real self would still remain undisturbed. This led to the second proposition that a higher form of political organization was both desirable and feasible. Such a structure would be in accordance with the needs and nature of the individual.

For Rousseau, vanity among human beings and difference in property and possessions led to inequality. The rich became richer and the poor, poorer. Laws were enacted to protect property rights. Civil society degenerated into a state of war, extreme inequality, ostentation, cunning, ambition and enslavement. Through laws and other political devices, the rich were able to corner power and dominate, while the poor descended into slavery. Civilized man was born a slave and died as one. Smith, while reviewing the *Discourses* criticized Rousseau for sharing Bernard Mandeville's (1670-1733) view that there was no powerful instinct in the human being that made him seek society for its own sake and that society was itself an instrument of the cunning and the powerful to maintain their superiority over the weak.

The natural man lost his ferocity once he began to live in society. He became weak. Desires expanded and comforts in due course became necessities, leading to a loss of natural independence. Increasing dependence created problems in human relationships, for it made people vain and contemptuous. While self-esteem was good for a person, vanity led to an individual's social ills. Vanity could not be satisfied for it made the satisfaction of desires difficult. Once an individual became vain, it was difficult to get rid of his vanity.

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Thus Rousseau rejected the Enlightenment's belief in human progress of reason through science and technology. The latter did not bring about moral improvement, since continued decadence measured in terms of human unhappiness would be the fate of most contemporary societies. He summarized this state of affairs in the *Emile* as, though God had made all things good, it was man who meddled with them and made them evil. On receiving a copy of the *Discourses,* Voltaire, the high priest of the Enlightenment, replied scornfully that he had never seen any one use such intelligence to denigrate human progress and civilization. Starobinski (1988) regarded it as a substitute for sacred history, for Rousseau had rewritten the Genesis as a work of philosophy, complete with the Garden of Eden, original sin and the confusion of tongues. Its tone was that of a "mystic revealing great secrets". It influenced important social critics, from Robiespierre to Marx, for it focused on freedom and the deepest ills that flow from evil forms of society to scuttle it.

8.8 General Will and Individual Freedom

In the *Social Contract,* Rousseau portrayed the nature of the higher organization where he attempted to show that a human being's transformation need not always be for the worse, provided the right kind of polity could be built. Unlike the early contractuahsts, Rousseau was keen to show how the *right* rather than the *first* society could be created, for he was hopeful that the right society would transform the noble savage to a humane person, immortalized by his famous words, "*Man is born free and is everywhere in chains*". It would be a polity that would aim for the general, rather than the particular, interests of its members. The freedom that the noble savage enjoyed in the state of nature would be possible under the right kind of society governed by the "General Will". According to Riley (1998) the notions of the General Will (volonte generale) and Particular Will (volonte particuliere) were elaborately used in the works of eminent scholars such as Pascal, Malebranche, Bayle, Fenelon, Bousset, Fontenelle and Leibniz between 1640 and 1715. However, in the writings of Diderot and Rousseau the notion of General Will was secular rather than theological. Society and the individual, in his theory, were complementary. This became very clear at the very beginning of the book:

Notes Man is born free and is everywhere in chains.

> I mean to inquire if, in the civil order, there can be any sure and legitimate rule of administration, men being taken as they are and law as they might be. In this inquiry, I shall endeavour always to unite what right sanctions with what is prescribed by interest, in order that justice and utility may in no case be divided.

The right kind of society would enhance human freedom, for nothing was dearer to a person than liberty:

> To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties. For him who renounces everything no indemnity is possible. Such a renunciation is incomparable with man's nature; to remove all liberty from his will is to remove all morality from his acts.

Most of the French thinkers of the eighteenth century regarded liberty as crucial to the individual's development. Rousseau too reiterated this theme and regarded liberty as central to his theoretical construct. For Rousseau, the entire objective of a contract was to reconcile liberty with authority. Liberty was fundamental; so was authority, for one could not exist meaningfully without the other. The priority of freedom was the highest, which was the most instinctive urge in the individual,

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even in the state of nature. He rejected the idea that the social contract involved the surrender of freedom to a third person. Instead, a legitimate polity had to "defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before".

Rousseau's conception had many positive points. He took it for granted that human beings could not return to the state of nature. Consequently, whatever had to be achieved was discovered only within civil society. This enabled him to dream of a golden past and visualize a future based on a better order and human perfection. Analogically, the difference could be compared with the distinction between primitive communism and true communism that existed in Marxism. Another important aspect in Rousseau's theory was the realization that every human activity was basically related to politics:

> I had realized that everything was basically related to politics, and that no matter how one approached it, no people would ever be anything but what the nature of its government made it. Therefore, the great question of the best possible government seemed to me to reduce itself to this: which is the form of government fitted to shape the most virtuous, the most enlightened, the wisest, and in short, the "best" people, taking that word in its noblest meaning?

Rousseau regarded consent as the basis of society, but emphasized the importance of the community along with the need to protect individual freedom. A community was created for the benefit of the individual, and Rousseau attempted to reconcile the two claims: that of the community with that of the individual, the claims of authority with those of liberty. A community that was constituted by all consenting individuals voluntarily submitting to the general will was the solution to his paradox of persons born free, but yet in chains. There was a moral transformation in the individual once a community was created. This was because, having voluntarily created it, the community was seen as furthering the individual's moral autonomy. Since it was through society that individuals realized their full potential, it could be reorganized to ensure the freedom that individuals enjoyed when they were in a state of nature. This was possible once the right society was created, for that would maximize (or at least offer the quintessence of) individual liberty.

> To project the question on a grander scale, one can see in Rousseau's political thought an intuitive attempt to reconcile the greatest traditions of western political philosophy, that of "will and artifice" and that of "reason and nature". For general will is surely rationalized well. And yet it is not self rationalized will in a Kantian sense but will rationalized by the standards and conditions of idealized ancient polity. Whatever Rousseau means, in undertaking a fusion of two great modes of political thinking, and however unsuccessful the attempt to make general will a viable conception, one must always, while analyzing and even criticizing the result, grant the grandeur and importance of the effort. For if one could succeed in having the best of both idioms, one would have a political philosophy which would synthesize almost everything of value in the history of western political thought (Riley 1980: 97).

Rousseau amalgamated the cohesiveness and solidarity of the ancient Greek *polis* with modern voluntarism and the notion of individual freedom. His ideal republic would be a community of virtue, for only virtuous individuals could be truly free. A free society presupposed virtue. A whole community rested on moral law. From Plato Rousseau got the idea that political subjection was primarily moral and the community was the supreme ethical entity. The community was a moral and collective person and not merely an aggregation. He kept ancient Sparta and Rome in mind as models of his ideal republic. He described the community vested with a "General Will", a will of all individuals thinking of general and. public interests. It was the "Common Me", meaning that the best spirit of the individual was represented in it. The selfish nature of the human individual was transformed, bringing forth cooperative instincts and essential goodness:

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> Both Rousseau and Kant denied that rational self-interest is a reputable moral motive and excluded prudence from the list of moral virtues. The outcome might be a more radical doctrine of equality that could be defended on grounds of reason and individual rights, since Rousseau supposed that the moral virtues exist in the greatest purity among the common people.

The General Will would be the source of all laws. The human being would be truly free if he followed the dictates of the law. Civil liberty, for Rousseau, was similar to Locke's notion of freedom under civil law. It meant freedom from the assault of others. Individuals are free only if they have physical security. Freedom also meant eliminating the arbitrary will of another person and that would mean the establishment of the rule of law. None should have greater influence in the making of the law and no one would be above the law. Dependence upon a democratic law was liberating but dependence on the will of another person was most shameful. In the *Emile* Rousseau pointed out two kinds of dependence: "dependence on things which is the work of nature; and dependence on men, which is the work of society. Dependence on things, being non-moral, does no injury to liberty and begets no vices; dependence on men, being out of order, give rise to every kind of vice, and through this master and slave become mutually depraved. If there is any cure for this society evil, it is to be found in the substitution of law for the individual; in arming the General Will with a real strength beyond the power of any individual will". Of course, if one had to be free then one had to obey one's own will which meant that one's will and the laws of a state would have to be in harmony. Each individual would have to be a lawmaker, consenting to obey a law if it maximized freedom. Hence he desired that the state to be free would have to be a consensual and participatory democracy. He was categorical that the General Will could emerge only in an assembly of equal lawmakers. It could not be alienated. The "executive will" could not be the "General Will". Only the legislative will, which was sovereign, could be the General Will. Interestingly, the legislature was supreme for both Locke and Rousseau. While Locke defended *representative majoritarian democracy* within which the legislature was supreme, for Rousseau it was *direct democracy* that embodied the legislative will. The individual participated in the articulation of the General Will; for citizenship was the highest that one could aspire for. The General Will could not be the will of the majority. In fact, it did not represent the will of all. It was the difference between the sum of judgements about the common good and the mere aggregate of personal fancies and individual desires. It would always aim and promote the general interests and will of all its members.

The body politic, therefore, is also a moral being which possesses a will; and this general will, *which always tends toward the conservation and well-being of the whole and of each part*, and which is the source of the laws, is for the members of the state in their relations both to one another and to the state, the rile of what is just and what is unjust (Rousseau 1958: 146).

Freedom, for Rousseau, was moral self-determination or the ability of the individual to exercise his autonomy. Unlike Hobbes and Locke, he did not define freedom as merely absence of restraint or coercion. Rousseau believed that submission to the General Will attenuated freedom. He had faith in the educative powers of political institutions to mould people's nature so that their "real" selves overwhelmed their narrow selfish concerns. The General Will would work if it was general in two respects: generality of origin, and of object. The former required that all laws be made by all citizens. Moreover, the laws should be such that they were in the general interest of everyone. This would ensure that the good of all was promoted:

> The Sovereign cannot impose on the subjects any fetters that are of no use to the community. It cannot even will to do so, for under the law of reason nothing takes places without a cause.... The commitments that bind us to the body politic are obligatory only because they are mutual, and their nature is such that in fulfilling them one cannot work for someone else without also working for oneself. Why is the general

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> will always, right, and why do all constantly want the happiness of each of them, if not because everyone applies the word *each* to himself and thinks of himself as he votes for all (Rousseau ibid: 168).

Rousseau also distinguished between independence and liberty, separating them as exclusive of each other. Liberty consisted in acting according to one's wishes. It was not being subject to the wills of other people. Anyone who was a master over others was not himself free. He regarded liberty and equality as being interdependent. Unless people were *equal* they could not be *free*.

Rousseau rejected the idea of total surrender of powers, which made the individual submissive to the sovereign. This would ensure social peace without liberty. In response to Hobbes, he stated: "tranquillity is also found in dungeons; but is that enough to make them desirable places to live in?" Liberty was quintessentially human. Rousseau's concept of sovereignty differed from that of Hobbes and Locke. Hobbes spoke of a total surrender of powers by the individuals to a third party distinct from the people, and delineated the legal theory of sovereignty. Rousseau also spoke of total surrender, but not to a third party. Instead, sovereignty was vested in the political community. It was for this reason that Vaughan (1962) characterized Rousseau's sovereign as similar to Hobbes', with its head chopped off. Hobbes' conception of a personalized sovereign power was missing in Rousseau.

Sovereignty, for Rousseau, was inalienable and indivisible, but vested in the body politic, thereby expounding the concept of popular sovereignty. He was original, for he ruled out transfer of sovereignty and accepted the idea that sovereignty originated and stayed with the people (Cranston 1986: 92-97). Unlike Hobbes, for whom the sovereign was the ruler, the legal state, Rousseau distinguished the sovereignty of the people, the political community from that of the government. It provided the foundation of public right. Locke, on the other hand, shunned the idea of sovereignty for it suggested political absolutism. His conception of a limited state and individual rights led him to the idea that people were sovereign, but their sovereignty was held in abeyance when the government was in power, and within the government it was the legislature that was supreme.

Rousseau saw the government as an agent of the General Will, the sovereign entity in the body politic. Like Montesquieu, he believed all forms of government were not suited to all countries. A government had to reflect the character of a country and its people. He also proposed civil religion for cultivating the moral foundations of the state. Civil religion enabled the citizens to fulfil their duties. It promoted public interest:

> The dogmas of the civil religion ought to be simple, few in number, precisely worded, without explanations or commentaries. The existence of a powerful, intelligent, beneficent divinity that foresees and provides; the life to come; the happiness of the just; the punishment of the wicked; the sanctity of the social contract and of the laws. These are the positive dogmas. As for the negative dogmas, I have limited them to just one, namely intolerance. It is part of the cults we have excluded.

The sovereign could not oblige his citizens to believe these precepts, though Rousseau made belief a condition for membership of a community. A person who did not accept could be banished not because of impiety, but for unsociability, "for being incapable of sincerely loving the laws and justice, and of sacrificing his life, if necessary, for his duty" (Rousseau ibid: 226). Once a citizen had decided to abide by these precepts, he was bound to uphold them. The state could execute anyone who acted as if he did not believe them. For Rousseau, acceptance of religion indicated the limitations of reason.

Rousseau saw toleration as essential, but, like Locke, ruled out being tolerant towards the Roman Catholics and the atheists. He was also critical of philosophical anarchists, for whom law was not all that sacred. Like Machiavelli, he considered religion as necessary for providing a code of conduct and for binding the citizens emotionally to the state. It played an important role in the

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formation of national spirit. Rousseau tried to free the individual from the tyranny of the clergy, and instead subjected him to the religious principles dictated by the nature and necessities of the state itself. He insisted that only patriotic citizens could enjoy and cherish freedom. He spoke of national education which would eradicate superstitions and prejudices, for it was an education of character rather than of the intellect.

The most controversial aspect of the notion of the General Will was Rousseau's assertion that freedom consisted in following its dictates. True freedom could be realized if one followed the moral law that one had agreed to adhere to willingly and voluntarily. Freedom could not be through maximization of self-interest, but by promotion of certain common ends. The General Will held the key to the moral transformation of the individual, since it consisted of all the real wills as opposed to the actual will. The real will was the capacity and intention within the individual to aim for the general welfare of all. The actual will, however, was the selfish individual will. Rousseau tried to obviate human selfishness by designing democratic institutions that would provide the incentive to accept moral laws which advanced common interests. An important precondition was a certain level of economic and social equality. Even with the acceptance of the General Will, it was possible that there could be an erring individual who might be enslaved by his lower self, and therefore be unfree. In that case the individual could be "forced to be free".

Rousseau did not see any possibility of the General Will becoming tyrannical. As such, he did not provide any safeguards. He was an advocate of liberty involving self-mastery. It signified freedom to do something. Berlin (1969) regarded positive liberty as necessary for a decent humane existence, but found it problematic, for though autonomy and self-control were good, they could be perverted into a "freedom" to achieve "self lealization". Freedom, for Rousseau, meant obedience to a rational will, which in turn suggested the existence of one life plan, one way of life for all people. The metaphysical idea behind positive liberty was monism, that everything could be explained with reference to a single homogeneous principle and discoverable laws. Rousseau's shared experience of life became commonality of interests for Burke. A defence of positive liberty led to determinism and totalitarianism. Rousseau's vision was illiberal, for it presumed that all moral, political and social conflict was a symptom of immorality or unreason, if not error. It also presupposed that a harmonious and conflictless community symbolized identity of wills among free individuals.

8.9 Role of the Legislator

Rousseau believed that one of the reasons for the success of ancient republics was the role of the legislator. A legislator, an exceedingly rare figure in moments of history with superhuman responsibilities, created persons capable of constituting the General Will. The role of the legislator would be to transform individuals and change human nature, alter the constitution with the purpose of strengthening it, and bring about a complete moral existence to an otherwise partial one. The legislator was a charismatic figure with semi-divine qualities. He was independent of the people, but would devote himself to their happiness by protecting their interests. Rousseau had the same adulation for legislators that one found subsequently in Burke.

The legislator played a key role in the establishment of the state, but not in its routine law-making functions. He proposed laws with the support of the people. Rousseau frequently mentioned Lycurgus, the lawgiver of Sparta as an example. Interestingly, he suggested that he was qualified to be an appropriate legislator for Corsica and Poland. The legislator had to be aware of the size of the territory, which had to be small and compact for self-sufficiency and self-government. Like Plato and Aristotle, he felt that moral character and political participation were best possible in a society that was fairly equal and with sufficient material goods. He did not have any conception of a mass society. Rousseau also gave centrality to the role of education in moulding character, shaping opinions and tastes. He was equally concerned with public ceremonies and public education, for these would instil a sense of national patriotism.

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8.10 Critique of Liberal Representative Government

For Rousseau, contrary to a representative parliamentary government, a *participatory democracy* was desirable, for it secured freedom, self-rule, equality and virtue. These were things that justified restraints on the individual, for they would make him truly happy. And since no existing government fulfilled all these criteria, none of them had an absolute claim to an individual's obedience. Salvation of the individual would be through politics and not through religion (Colletti 1969: 146). It was with the destruction of the present coercive society, and with the institution of a free form of political and ethical community that salvation would be attained. Rousseau, like Plato, believed in the primacy of politics.

Rousseau rejected the English parliamentary system of government, for it gave the people the illusion of freedom whereas in reality the English people were free only during the time of elections. Once representatives were elected, people lost their freedom:

> Sovereignty cannot be represented, for the same reason that it cannot be alienated ... the people's deputies are not, and could not be, its representatives; they are merely its agents; and they cannot decide anything faintly. And law which the people has not ratified in person is void; it is not law at all. The English people believes itself to be free; it is gravely mistaken; it is free only during the election of Members of Parliament; as soon as the Members are elected, the people is enslaved; it is nothing.

Rousseau firmly believed that freedom was a reality when people actually governed and took part in the law-making process. It was when people exercised their freedom devoid of appetites that they were truly their own masters. He therefore proposed direct participation in legislation, for human will could not be represented. The contract enabled the citizens to be as free as the individuals, for:

> In giving himself to all, each person gives himself to no one. And since there is no associate over whom he does not acquire the same right that he would grant others over himself, he gains the equivalent of everything he loses, along with a greater amount of force to preserve what he has.

The identification and submersion of the individual with the community was something that went against the liberal argument which strictly defended the protection of an individual's private space, and over which the individual was the sovereign person. The fact that the individual had rights was a kind of a protective shield through which the individual safeguarded his autonomy. This implied that the individual had rights against the state, which could be invoked when the state overstepped the limits of its authority.

Rousseau tried to grapple with the problem of devising public life in a manner that would secure and protect the moral liberty of the individual. Liberty was obedience to self-prescribed laws. He saw the need for democratic institutions to protect the true freedom of the individual. He rejected representative institutions as these were based on the idea of "winners take it all". He ruled out competitiveness not only in economics but also in politics, for competitiveness killed cooperation and fellow feeling. On the other hand, anarchy was unpleasant. Moral liberty could be secured only in an association in which not only was the whole community defended and protected, but also the individual member. He ruled out factions and organized interest groups, for they undermined popular sovereignty and moral liberty. Law had to be made by fully-informed and equal citizens. To a Lockeian liberal, Rousseau's identification of liberty with the public domain would seem illiberal, which was why many of Rousseau's critics saw Rousseau's "General Will" inspiring twentieth-century totalitarian leaders like Hitler and Stalin. Rousseau rejected the Lockeian liberal solution of instituting government for the protection of private property, for even though all were treated equally it would only lead to formal equality. It was to the advantage of the rich, who wished to protect their property from the poor. Rousseau derived a great deal of inspiration from Locke, but differed significantly from his prescriptions of limited government and a minimal state.

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Rousseau has been the inspiration to theorists of participatory democracy in recent times. Pateman (1970) drawing insights from Rousseau observed the inconsistency that existed between universal formal rights and class inequality in participation which she felt could be resolved only through institutions that encourage self-management. Democracy at the workplace would have to deal with complex problems like market instabilities, coordination of resources and availability of different types of labour and skills. Democracy also would have to be reconciled with efficiency and leadership. She accepted the core institutions of liberal democracy, competitive parties, political representatives, periodic elections but she favoured direct participation and control over immediate local bodies complemented by party and interest group competition in governmental affairs.

8.11 Federation of Nations for World Peace

The ideals of republicanism and democracy ushered in by the two major revolutions in the eighteenth century, in America and France, also saw the rise of a school of pacifist thinking that rejected the medieval moral-legal doctrine of war, including that of just war. The notion of just war posited that there be a just cause, a right authority for initiating the use of force, a right intention on the part of the party/parties employing such force, that the resort to force be proportional (not doing more harm than good), that it be a last resort, that it be undertaken with the end of peace as its goal and there a reasonable hope of success. Three types of just cause were recognized in the Middle Ages: to retake something wrongfully taken, to punish evil and to defend against an attack either planned or in progress. All these ideas existed in the Roman thought and the practice of war in the classical era. In the twentieth century international law self-defence against an armed attack in progress was the major justification for the use of force.

The pacifist writers—Desiderius Erasmus (1466/1469-1536), More (1478-1535), John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), Emeric Cruce (1590-1648), Francois Fenelon (1651-1715), William Penn (1644-1718), Abbe de St. Pierre's (1658-1743), Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant and Bentham derived their inspiration from the Stoics and early Christian radical positions and were reinforced by the then European ideals of cosmopolitanism, humanitarianism and bourgeois internationalism. Common in their perceptions was their profound skepticism to war and the military profession and the great goal of life for European intellectuals was human happiness without any trace of the tragic (Hazard 1963: 18). There was considerable disagreement as to the means—whether it would be through the application of scientific and technical reason or through man's return to nature and rediscovery of his original simplicity—but all of them were convinced that society was on the threshold of breaking away from the shackles of traditional authority and superstition, erase the historic curses of ignorance, disease and war and begin as articulated by Condorcet 'upon the absolutely indefinite perfectibility of man, which knows no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has placed us'. There was complete cynicism about the doctrine of just war seen as smokescreen to hide the aggressive impulses of ambitious monarchs. However, none of them at the turn of the eighteenth century, including Kant, advocated world government, as they resisted the "very idea of concentrating power in the form of world government... . The mood was one of suspicion of all political power and of faith in the beneficence of individual human reason and wisdom" (Heater 1990: 55). Montesquieu pointed out that reason would help human beings discover universally valid rules of reciprocity, which, if enforced by positive law, would maintain peace, security and a certain degree of fairness within civil society. Montesquieu, reiterating Mandeville counted on the transformation of human existence by the 'spirit of commerce' guided by the new science of finance or economics. Commercialization would help human beings get rid of their prejudices that veil their true needs. By recognizing the common need and aspirations, human beings discovered their humanity thus transcending previous religious, ethnic and national sectarianism. Once captivated by the allure of peaceful trade, human beings would look to military exploits and war with increasing disgust. Commerce brought in frugality, economy, moderation,

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work prudence, tranquility, order and rule. Montesquieu's defence of manufactures, commerce, finance, riches and even luxury enabled him to not only take his stand with the moderns and against the Greeks but also influence Bentham and Kant to regard trade and commerce as the basis of perpetual peace. Voltaire poked fun at the two kings each of whom had *Te Deums* sung in his own camp after the battle and defends a republican government as it allows people to constantly renew the sovereign power, a point central to the Kantian thesis for perpetual peace. Voltaire was ambivalent about people's right to revolt and dismiss an unjust ruler. Despite considering the republican government as the ideal he supported constitutional monarchy ruled by an enlightened despot.

The eighteenth century was full of projects for abolishing war and establishing peace, namely that of Cruce Le N*ouveau Cynee or The New Cyneas* (1623), *Penn 's Essay toward the Present and Future Peace of Europe* (1693), St. Pierre's *A Project for Making Peace Perpetual in Europe* (1713), Rousseau's *A Lasting Peace through the Federation of Europe* (1774), Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1795) and Bentham's *Plan for a Universal and Perpetual Peace* (1789). Cruce suggested that armies should be abolished and called for a world court. Cruce's importance was his foresight that international organizations were crucial to solve international disputes. Among the various peace plans Penn was the pioneer to have envisioned disarmament as the most effective guarantee for international peace. He stressed the importance of peace in view of the suffering and destruction that war entails. War could be prevented within a framework of justice for both individuals and groups if conflicts could be resolved in a fair way. Justice could be ensured if governments enforced laws impartially. For mamtaining peace in Europe, he proposed a Sovereign Parliament of European states to decide disputes collectively and enforce decisions though states could still maintain their sovereignty in internal matters, thus anticipating the European Union.

Rousseau like Abbe de St. Pierre's (1658-1743) believed that federation established lasting peace. He summarized Pierre's voluminous plans and pointed out that while private wars have been prevented with the institution of governments, larger wars could be prevented with the formation of a federation that would unite nations just as nations, unite individuals under the authority of law. He observed that such an arrangement was not new as it existed, in an embryonic form, in the Germanic Body, the Helvetic League, and the States General of the Netherlands, and the ancients had the Greek Amphictyons, the Etruscan Lucumonies, Latin *feriae*, and the city leagues of the Gauls. For the success of the federation, Rousseau stipulated four necessary conditions: (1) every important power must be a member; (2) the laws they legislate must be binding; (3) a coercive force must be capable of compelling every state to obey the common resolves; and (4) no member may be allowed to withdraw.

Rousseau's plan consisted of five articles. The first will set up a permanent alliance with a congress to settle and terminate by arbitration or judicial pronouncement all conflicts. The second will decide which nations shall have a vote, how the presidency shall pass from one to another and how the contribution quotas shall be raised to provide for common expenses. The third declared the permanence of existing boundaries. The fourth specified how violators shall be banned and forced to comply by the means of the arms of all the confederates. The fifth recommended majority vote to begin with but three quarters after five years and unanimity to change the articles.

Rousseau explained how his plan would remove the six motives that lead to war and these motives could be (1) to make conquests, (2) to protect themselves from aggression, (3) to weaken further a powerful neighbour, (4) to maintain their rights against attack, (5) to settle a difference which has defied friendly negotiation and (6) to fulfil some treaty obligations. Rousseau was confident that with the exception of conquest the federation will be able to accomplish all the other purposes and even in conquest it will be able to deter by marshalling all the powers against the aggressors. Rousseau listed many of the evils and dangers that prevailed in Europe of his time, such as injustice because of might, insecurity of nations, military expenses due to external attacks

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or their threats, no guarantee for international agreements, unsafe and expensive means of obtaining justice when a wrong was committed, risk and inconvenience of wars, loss of trade during crises and general impoverishment and lack of security. The benefits of arbitration were certainty of settling disputes peacefully, abolition of the causes of disputes, personal security for rulers, fulfilment of agreements between rulers, freedom of trade, reduced military expenses, increase in population, agriculture and public wealth and happiness. Rousseau also concluded that St. Pierre's plans were not adopted because the princes were short-sighted in their ambition and greed for power. The other related reasons were their refusal to submit themselves to arbitration and their blind pursuit of their self-interest neglecting the wisdom of general good. He considered revolution as the only means to establish the federation but sensing the violence it would unleash, he realized that it would be dreaded and would be difficult to establish under the existing circumstances.

8.12 Women and Family

Rousseau defended the patriarchal family. He saw the family as a natural institution, and the oldest of all societies. It was based on natural ties of love and affection, and originated in the biological process of procreation and in the natural differences between the sexes. The family provided the model for other social institutions that were natural. Within the family, age preceded youth, and males had a natural authority over females. In fact, he regarded women as a permanently subversive force within the political system, a point reiterated subsequently by Hegel. He preferred patriarchal families, partly because they needed a single authority (which could not be exerted by the wife because she periodically got confined by reproductive activities), and partly because the man had to dominate his wife to ensure that she was chaste and virtuous. He repeatedly argued that a good woman would stay within the family circle, avoiding social distractions and political preoccupations. It was interesting to note that Rousseau's concerns with natural goodness and social corruption did not figure in his analysis of the status of women. He assigned a subordinate position to women in society, and an education that would be suitable to an inferior position.

For Rousseau, men and women differed in virtues. While a man's virtue was his rational capacity, a woman's virtue was her sexuality, which meant chastity, gentleness and obedience. Since the functions of men and women differed, their education would also have to be different. The difference in the biological constitution of women—pregnancy, nursing the young—did not enable them to be at par with men, and thereby engage in activities that were similar to the ones that men pursued. While men could have the maximum freedom, women would be trained in accepting the constraints and dictates of social and public opinion. If women tried to be like men, they would cease to have qualities that were purely womanly. On the contrary, they would acquire qualities of both men and women, which they would be unable to reconcile and assimilate, falling below their own standards. The woman had an identity only in relation to a man, and therefore her education had to be geared to please and be at the mercy of a man:

> Woman is specially made for man's delight. If man in his turn ought to be pleasing in her eyes, the necessity is less urgent, his virtue is in his strength, he pleases because he is strong. I grant you this is not the law of love, but it is the law of nature, which is older than love itself .... If woman is made to please and to be in subjection to man, she ought to make herself pleasing in his eyes and not provoke him to anger.

Rousseau did not think women to be suitable for abstract and speculative truths, and for principles and axioms of scientific study. For Rousseau their studies would be *practical*, for women loved finery, were naturally cunning and more talkative than men. He pointed out that little girls loved to play with dolls and took to sewing rather than reading and writing. He did not believe that traits in children developed out of the socializing process.

Rousseau regarded women as a source of sexual passion. Nature had made women the stimulator of men's passions, hence men had to try and please them if their desires were to be satisfied. Men

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in this sense were dependent on women, who controlled them through their gentleness, their kindness and their tears to get what they wanted. As long as men were dependent on women for love, women would get what they wanted. The sole protection men had was to repress women's sexuality and their own passionate selves:

> He (Rousseau) was one of the most powerful critics of the notion of original sin, and insisted on the natural goodness of man, especially his sexual desire—if sexism means insistence on essential differentiation of function between men and women both naturally and socially, then Rousseau was indeed a sexist. If on the other hand it means treating women as objects and subordinating them, he certainly was not a sexist. Rather he was concerned with enhancing the power of women over ... . It is the related-ness, the harmonious relatedness of men and women, which he takes as the model and foundation of all human relatedness.

Rousseau, like Aristotle, regarded the family as the first form of society, though the relationships within a family needed a different kind of regulation from the ones within the state. The relationship between the father and children was based on love and the superior physical strength of the father. Paternal authority was established by nature as long as the children needed protection. The father needed the ultimate and sole control over his wife's sexual independence in order to assert his control over the children. Rousseau reinforced the "renewed eighteenth century emphasis on female chastity and monogamy". He recommended the Athenian model where women confined themselves to the private space of the home, enjoying the status of a wife, mother and householder, and wrote:

> When Greek women married, they disappeared from public life; within the four walls of their home they devoted themselves to the care of their household and family. This is the mode of life prescribed for women alike by nature and reason.

Paradoxical as it may seem at first glance, Rousseau did not accept patriarchal households where the husband/father was the absolute person with total authority over his wife and children. He believed in the ideal of a compassionate marriage where the wife was a companion to her husband. It was for this reason that a woman had to be educated up to a point of making her agreeable to her husband and intelligent to her children, *but not beyond that*. A free, equal, rational and independent being with a mind was beyond his conception. Many of these arguments were critically analyzed and rejected by Wollstonecraft in her A Vindication of the *Rights of Woman* (1792).

It was suggested that Rousseau did not consider women as inferior, but accorded them a subordinate position for the sake of the family which he held very dear. However, there was no denying the fact that Rousseau, who had been the first to highlight the effects of inequalities and questioned many of the inherited assumptions, reiterated many of the male prejudices without critically dissecting them. He also failed to articulate an equal status for women in the family and home. However, he glorified women as mothers and wives, roles most women performed.

There were a few greater enemies of sexual equality than Jean-Jacques Rousseau, yet he was revered and adored by women everywhere .... Rousseau might have told women (gracefully) that they were weak and stupid, but he also told them that they were beautiful, that they were the moral ally of humanity and that they are utterly necessary for men's happiness .... The secret of Rousseau's success was he glorified and aggrandized women in the only career open to them that of wife and mother—and he promised them in return love, respect and happiness. It might have been a more subtle form of belittlement and new justification for exploitation disguised as sentimentalism but it set the tone for much of the nineteenth century (Proctor 1990: 179).

Though Rousseau was inspired by Plato, he did not share Plato's belief in sexual equality and giving women a share in the political process.

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Self-Assessment

Choose the correct option:

1. Jean Jacques Rousseau was the greatest thinker that the ..... produced.
   (*i*) English (*ii*) Russian (*iii*) French (*iv*) None of these.
2. Rousseau was born on June 28, 1712 in the city of .....
   (*i*) Germany (*ii*) France (*iii*) Geneva (*iv*) None of these.
3. Le Devin du village (The Village Soothsayer) was performed for the first time in Paris on March 1, ...
   (*i*) 1754 (*ii*) 1753 (*iii*) 1760 (*iv*) 1751
4. In the ..... Rousseau distinguished between the state of nature and civil society.
   (*i*) Emile (*ii*) Discourses (*iii*) Politics (*iv*) None of these.

8.13 Summary

- Rousseau's theory, like Marx's, was international in character. There was a conception of the human family and an international federation as the end of his political ideal. He also projected the body politic as a moral being which would preserve the welfare of the whole as well as its constituent parts. It was the source of all laws, and determined the relationships between its members. It would be an end in itself and also a means to an end. Rousseau was also seen as the spiritual father of the French Revolution of 1789. Burke referred to him as "the insane Socrates of the National Assembly". Many of the ideas of Rousseau were put into practice during the "later and more terrible phases of the Revolution".
- Rousseau provided an excellent analysis of human nature in politics. He refused to look at the individual as a supernatural entity. He rejected the idea of natural sociability that the ancients propounded, and also the notion of radical selfishness and egoism that the moderns stressed on. He supported the idea of transformation of human nature from a narrow self-seeking being into a public-spirited person. He took the individual as he was, "partly rational, partly emotional, influenced by considerations of utility, but even more swayed by passions and prejudices, at bottom moral and virtuous, but easily corrupted by bad institutions, and in most cases, dependent for the maintenance of his virtue of good ones. He brought to the fore the importance of ethics in politics as he was not interested merely in happiness or utility" (Cassirer 1946: 70). In the last resort, the value of Rousseau's political thought, "was not completely individualist, while at the same time it was equally not based on any glorification of society as distinct from the individuals of which it was composed" (Cobban 1964: 168). He had the most rigorous and revolutionary theory of sovereignty conceived as omnipotent and omnipresent. The state represented the pinnacle of human existence, the source of all morality, freedom and community. Its purpose was not merely to resolve conflicts, but to be a means to liberate the individual from the uncertainties and hypocrisies of traditional society. The state was a redeemer of the individual, enabling the latter to escape the "torments, insecurities and dissensions of ordinary society" (Nisbet 1990: 125-126, 138). "Sovereignty, for Rousseau, is not a mere legal thing; it is the sum total of all virtues and even freedoms" (Nisbet ibid: 110).
- The individual and the state were two themes in Rousseau's theory. Both were simultaneously sovereign. Both were needed to realize a just social and political order. To see Rousseau as an individualist or a champion of state absolutism would be to do injustice to the complex kaleidoscopic nature of his political philosophy. What emerged was a radical individualism on the one hand, and tmcompromising authoritarianism on the other. His individualism was not in the sense of an immunity from the state, but one that was coextensive of the state.

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- Rousseau's political philosophy, by implication, according to Cobban, discussed the subject matter of the politics of the twentieth century, like the reality of nationalism, state sovereignty, the need for economic equality and the state's role in realizing it, the bases of popular politics and the reconciliation of these with the principles of politics based on a rational, self-determining individual. Rousseau also pointed out the close relation-ship between liberty and equality, and the fact that without equality, liberty would be non-existent. He abandoned his initial hostility to property, and accepted it as an essential institution of society. Unlike Locke, he recognized how property could become an instrument of private domination, which was why property had to be controlled by the General Will. He considered property as being the root cause of moral corruption and injustice. Since industrial society was not yet an existing reality, he idealized a property-owning society where everyone would be equal and independent. In this he retained the Lockeian spirit.
- Liberty, for Rousseau, was the greatest good. Liberty was only possible when dependence between human beings was eliminated, if not at least regulated by law. He understood liberty as participation and popular sovereignty. It was for this reason that many see his philosophy as being compatible with collectivism, Jacobinism, despotism and totalitarianism. It was anti-Lockeian, for there was no effort to preserve the rights of the individual against the state (Vaughan 1962: 48). The *Social Contract* sounded the death-knell of individualism, which had held sway since the days of Locke.
- Rousseau's theory was egalitarian, anti-hierarchical, republican and democratic. Like Locke and Montesquieu, he was critical of the nobility and benevolent despots and upheld the rule of law. Nobody (other than Rousseau) stressed the importance of community on the grounds that interdependence and cooperation enhanced the powers of human beings, and that socialization enabled them to acquire consciousness and rationality. However, he was not an unabashed supporter or admirer of modern society and civilization.
- Rousseau's solution for the ills of society was not to beckon men to the woods, nor to advocate the destruction of all social inter-dependencies. He proposed, instead, paradox: let us create a society which causes men to grow close to one another, to become so strongly solidary that each member will be made dependent on the whole society and, by that very fact, be released from personal dependencies.
- There was no denying the fact that Rousseau's political philosophy was one of the most innovative, striking, remarkable, and brilliantly-argued theories. In the entire history of social and political ideas, there were only a few parallels to his edifice in its force of argument and passion for outlining a structure which was supposed to put an end to, most, if not all, human predicaments.
- His most spectacular achievement was that he understood the pivotal problem that faced individuals in society—how to reconcile individual interests with those of the larger interests of society. He tried to resolve this delicate problem in his own way, by depicting human nature in operation under the sway of an all-comprehensive political structure. The attempt by itself was highly laudable, as this was the most important problem that a political theorist faced, and in most cases the resolution was far from satisfactory.
- Rousseau's influence has changed over the last three centuries. In the eighteenth century, he was seen as a critic of the status quo, challenging the concept of progress, the core of the Enlightenment belief-structure. In the nineteenth century, he was seen as the apostle of the French Revolution and the founder of the Romantic Movement. In the twentieth century, he has been hailed as the founder of the democratic tradition, while at the same time assailed for being the philosophical inspiration of totalitarianism. These indicate that it has not been possible to interpret Rousseau within a single framework of analysis.

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- Rousseau was not Eurocentric in the same sense as Hegel, Marx, J.S. Mill and Montesquieu. He certainly transcended the localism that characterized their philosophies. While he scored on this front, he fell abysmally short in extending the conception of human equality to include women. He was a powerful exponent of human equality, which, paradoxically, did not include gender as a category. Had he perhaps overcome the prejudices of his time, he could have become the first spokesperson of a true, universal paradigm of an ideal political order.

8.14 Key-Words

1. Jacobianism : A radical republican during the French Revolution, a political group advocating equalitarian democracy during the French Revolution.
2. Despotism : The exercise of absolute power especially in a cruel and oppressive way.
3. Paradoxical : Seeming absurd or self-contradictory.

8.15 Review Questions

1. Examine Rousseau's critique of civil society
2. Discuss about the Rousseau's Theory of General Will.
3. Write an essay on Rousseau's life and his work.
4. Explain the views of Rousseau's on social contract.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*iii*) 2. (*iii*) 3. (*ii*) 4. (*i*)

8.16 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

Notes

Unit 9: Jeremy Bentham

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- know about Jeremy Bentham
- Understand meaning of utilitarian
- Discuss theory of state
- Explain economic ideas of Bentham
- Describe the women and Gender equality

Introduction

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), the founder of Utilitarianism, combined throughout his active life the careers of a philosopher, a jurist and that of a social reformer and an activist. Though trained to be a lawyer, he gave up the practice of law in order to examine the basis of law and pursue legal reforms. His utilitarian philosophy based on the principle of the "greatest happiness of the greatest number" was aimed "at rearing the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and law". He championed reforms of prison, legislation and parliament, and stressed the need for a new penal code for England. It was for these reasons that he has been regarded by J.S. Mill as a "progressive philosopher", "the great benefactor of mankind", "an enemy of the *status quo* and the greatest questioner of things established".

Did u know? Goethe described Bentham as "frightfully radical ass."

Bentham had his share of critics as well. Keynes characterized his ideas as the worm which had been gnawing at the insides of modern civilization responsible for its present moral decay. Oakeshott regarded him as a reformer of law and the first significant English writer, but uncharitably dismissed his influence as a thinker. Emerson characterized his philosophy as "stinking". Schumpeter

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considered his ideas as the "shallowest of all conceivable philosophies of life". J.S. Mill described him as a "boy" to the end, for he had "neither the internal experience nor the external, and had lived a quiet eunuch's life on a private income without ever growing up". Marx regarded him as "the arch-philistine, the insipid, leather tongued oracle of the commonplace bourgeois intelligence". Nietzsche (1955: 155-156) mocked at him with a little verse.

> Soul of washrag; "face of poker"
>
> Overwhelming mediocre,
>
> *Sans genie et sans esprit*.

Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) referred to utilitarianism as "a philosophy of social cookbook recipes".

9.1 Life Sketch

Bentham was born on February 15, 1748 in London in a prosperous middle-class family. He lost his mother at the age of 10. His father Jeremiah Bentham, generally strict and demanding, ensured a thorough education for his son, making the latter's childhood monotonous and gloomy. As a child, Bentham's major source of enjoyment was reading books, with no inclination to play. This explained his serious outlook. Bentham started to learn Latin at the age of three and went to Queen's College, Oxford, at the age of 12, learning to dislike, rebuke, suspect and hate anything that was ancient or traditional, both in ideas and institutions.

Bentham studied law and was called to the Bar in 1769. He never pleaded a single case and gave up the idea of practising law in the conviction that the whole system of law needed overhauling. Like Hobbes, he was deeply interested in science, especially chemistry and botany. The French philosophers Claude-Adrien Helvetius (1715-1771) and Cesare Bonesana, Marquis of Beccaria (1738-1794), inspired and influenced him. It was generally believed that he came across the phrase "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" with which his name was intrinsically associated in the 1767 English translation of Beccaria's *Essays on Crimes, and Punishments* (1764). Some other biographers contended that he borrowed the idea from Joseph Priestly (1733-1804). In 1770, Bentham acknowledged with a sensation of Archimedes the full import of Priestly's phrase as being a possible foundation of morals and legislation.

Bentham was profoundly impressed by Feneton's *Telemaque*, given to him by his French tutor. In Feneton's version, Mentor and Telemachus, in search of Ulysses came to Crete at a time when elections were to be held to fill a vacant throne. After an athletic competition, the victorious candidates were asked three questions: What Man was most free? Who was most unhappy? Which of the two ought to be preferred, a king who was invincible in war or a king who, without any military experience, could administer civil government with great wisdom in times of peace? Telemachus won the contest by arguing that the happiest ruler was one who made others happy. Bentham was profoundly influenced by this tale. In this sense, his greatest happiness principle was the rationale of his "childish, romantic idealization of Telemachus" (Mack ibid: 32).

From Helvetius, Bentham realized that legislation was the most significant of all worldly pursuits. Legislation could bring about suitable reforms, since all human beings were fundamentally alike and their differences were due to their upbringing, environment and education. He proclaimed "... what Bacon was to the physical world, Helvetius was to the moral. The moral world has therefore had its Bacon, but its Newton is yet to come" (Bentham cited in Halvey 1928: 19).

Bentham hoped to be that Newton. He also credited Helvetius with providing him an answer to the meaning of "genius", a word that bothered him ever since he was introduced as a "prodigy" by his father to the headmaster of Westminster School, Dr Markham. Unable to answer the meaning of "genius" when queried by the headmaster, Bentham was embarrassed. A genius meant to produce. On learning its meaning, he began to wonder whether he had a genius for anything? After enough soul-searching he realized that he had a gift for codifying laws.

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From the early 1770s, the study of legislation became Bentham's most important preoccupation. He did not practise law, but concentrated on writing about what the law should *be*, rather than what it *was*. The period from the early 1770s to the mid-1780s was of great significance in the development of Bentham's ideas. During this time he devoted his energies to understanding the rational basis of law, both in England and other countries. In his earliest project, called "Preparatory Principles", he set upon himself the task of making a set of new and systematic legal terms which could be used for studying the theory and practice of law. His manuscripts consisted of definitions and analyses of basic terms and concepts in jurisprudence.

In the mid-1770s, at 28 years of age, Bentham wrote a lengthy critique of William Blackstone's (1723-1780) *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1769). A portion of this critique was published in 1776 as *A Fragment on Government*, arousing the interest of the Earl of Shelbourne, a Whig aristocrat. Impressed by Bentham's work, the earl invited him to stay in his country house at Bowood, Wilshire. This was the beginning of a close relationship, based on common ideas and purpose.

Interestingly, A *Fragment on Government* was first published anonymously, encouraging considerable speculation about its authorship. Its sales plummeted when the author's name was accidentally revealed. Coincidentally, 1776 was the year of publication of Smith's well-known book. *The Wealth of Nations*, the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the American colonies, and the announcement of Major Carthwright's charter for universal suffrage and annual parliaments. It was noteworthy that the Declaration referred to the "pursuit of happiness", motivating Bentham to discover the laws governing human action.

During his close association with the Earl of Shelbourne, Bentham got attracted to Lady Shelbourne's niece, Caroline Fox. This was his second love, the first being Mary Dunkley. However, neither of the relationships culminated in marriage and Bentham remained a bachelor. Bentham showered all his affections on his brother Samuel, nine years younger to him. He took a keen interest in his education and career, without being overbearing. He encouraged Samuel to visit Russia. He subsequently decided to visit Russia in 1780, and that visit proved to be a turning point in Bentham's life, for he began to take greater interest in legislation and reforms.

Bentham began to devote his time and energies to practical areas like public administration, economics and social policy, apart from concentrating on developing a theory of law and legislation. One reason for this shift was because of his involvement with Samuel's industrial concerns, devising details on the construction of a prison (or factory or workhouse) in a circular way, enabling the supervisor to monitor the place continuously. This came to be known as the Panopticon, or the inspection house.

Bentham viewed the Panopticon, derived from the Greek word meaning all seeing, as the capstone of Utilitarianism, for it would scientifically mete out felicific calculus by measuring pain justly. Having written a dissertation on punishments, in which he developed and systematized Beccaria's ideas, he was convinced that pain could be scientifically administered by experts. He devoted most of his time to devising the scheme, planning meticulously right down to the governor's urinal. He hoped to be appointed the first governor of the panopticon, and was confident that it would give him £37,000 a year. Like his brother, he believed unflinchingly in contraptions. "[M]orals reformed, health preserved, industry invigorated, instruction diffused, public burthens lightened, economy seated as it were upon a rock, the gordian knot of the poor laws not cut but untied, all by a simple idea in architecture" (Bentham cited in Semple 1992: 153).

In 1791, Bentham sent his plan to English Prime Minister Pitt, but the Panopticon never really materialized, forcing him to admit defeat 20 years later. A jail was built, but not on the design that Bentham recommended. Bentham was awarded compensation for his sincerity and effort, which did not cheer him. He confessed in his old age to John Bowring, the editor of the *Westminster Review* and his literary executor, that he did not like looking into panopticon papers, for it was like entering a haunted house.

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Bentham recommended "Big Brother" supervision with 14 hours a day, long hours on the treadwheel accompanied by martial music, totally rejecting solitary confinement as abhorrent and irrelevant. In his utilitarian mission to prevent crime, he advocated punishments like castration for rape and mild kebabbing for arsonists Subsequently, he applied the principles of the panopticon to poultry devising the first battery farm.

Foucault presented the panopticon as the quintessence of the disciplinary apparatus of the bourgeois state. He assailed the oppressive totalitarianism that supported self-seeking liberalism. It epitomized repressive rationality. This assessment was far from true. Bentham's proposal never really materialized for it to be considered a prototype of the illiberal capitalist state. He did not prescribe systematic solitary confinement for long-term convicts. He was not the sole ideological father of Victorian social engineering, for the Victorian conception of prison differed considerably from that of Bentham's plans. While Bentham proposed public inspection of the Panopticon, the Victorians wanted the gates of the jails to be closed. He was also against state-run prisons, for they would only lead to corruption and jobbery. Contract prisons, on the contrary, managed by tender and private initiatives would ensure efficiency and profitability. Though he pondered over the rationale for punitive measures, he accepted punishment as long as it served the high goals of utilitarianism (Semple ibid).

Bentham welcomed the French Revolution and sent his reform proposals, though none were adopted. But he was made an honorary citizen of France in 1792 for his *Draught of a New Plan for the Organization of the Judicial Establishment of France* (1790). In the early 1800s, his reputation started to spread, attracting attention even in far-off places like Russia and countries in Latin America.

In 1809, a close relationship between Bentham and James Mill (1773-1836) began, with Mill being convinced of the urgency for reforms. Under Mill's influence, Bentham became more radical. In 1817, Bentham published *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* in the form of catechism. In 1819, he completed the draft proposals of the Radical Reform Bill. Ari attack on the established church came in *Church of Englandism* in 1818. The codification of law became his primary concern from the 1780s to the 1830s.

Even in his old age Bentham remained in good health. He became financially well-off, with the English Parliament compensating him with £23,000 in 1813 for the non-implementation of the panopticon. He led a simple life, never seeing anyone except for some specific purpose. He relaxed by listening to music, and his favourites were Handel and Corelli. His main hobby was gardening, for that gave him supreme pleasure. He played badminton for physical fitness. He continued with his lifelong devotion to legal reform, looking upon it as a game. In 1819, he wrote:

> [W]hat sacrifice did I make ...? None at all. I followed my own taste. Chess I could not play without a partner ... codification was a little game I could play at alone ... codification, when I am dead, who can say how many other persons may be the better for.

Bentham invented devices like primitive telephones, suggested reforms for the London police, the London sewage and drainage systems, devised a central heating system, ran a law school from his home, worked on schemes for lowering the national debt, secured low interest loans for the poor, planned a national public education system, a national health service, and a national census, conceived a refrigerator for storing goods at low temperatures, and recommended a canal to be dug through Central America to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. He called himself "The Hermit of Queen's Square Place". Because of his simplicity, he attracted many disciples and followers. A modern counterpart of Bentham was Gandhi. His disciples venerated him as their spiritual leader and teacher. Though he led an ascetic life himself, he regarded asceticism with contempt, for saints were idlers. Bentham scorned spiritualism, for it glorified unhappiness and distrusted pleasures. Spiritualism negated his unflinching belief in happiness as the goal of all individuals.

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Bentham helped in founding the University of London. He donated 170 boxes and bundles of his books and writings. The offices at South Kensington have his bust till today. The college has his skeleton dressed in his favourite clothes, holding his walking stick "Dobbin", with which he used to stroll every morning in his Westminster garden. Being fond of inventing playful names for objects of daily use, he called his dining room "the shop", his teapot "Dick", and work desk "Caroccio". His table was raised on a platform and surrounded by a sunken walking passage, which he called the "vibrating ditch" or the "well". He composed humorous songs and was fond of rituals. Before going to bed, he spent an hour preparing for it. As he grew older, he became more light-hearted and casual.

Bentham started and financed the *Westminster Review* in 1824 with the idea of propagating his utilitarian principles. One of his critics wrote in 1830 that Bentham's exposition of the defects of the legal system was the greatest service that he or any other English political philosopher had ever rendered. Bentham's "new science", which would enable a legislator to mathematically measure and administer happiness, helped England to avoid the excesses, terror and tears of a violent revolution. This largely explained why Marxism and other radical doctrines did not have much influence in England.

Bentham lived till the age of 84, "codifying like any dragon", a phrase which he used to describe himself. His writings were voluminous, considering they ran into 11 stout volumes in close print, in double columns. His other famous works (not mentioned so far) include *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), *Anarchical Fallacies* (1791), *Discourse on Civil and Penal Legislation* (1802), *The Limits of Jurisprudence* (1802), *Indirect Legislation (1802), A Theory of Punishments and Rewards (1811), A Treatise on Judicial Evidence* (1813), *Papers upon Codification and Public Instruction* (1817), *The Book of Fallacies* (1824), *and Rationale of Evidence* (1827). *The last one was edited by* J.S. Mill.

Bentham described himself as "J.B., the most ambitious of the ambitious". He desired to preside over an empire consisting of the whole human race that included all cultures, all places, present as well as future. He expressed a desire to awaken once in a century to contemplate the prospect of a world gradually adopting his principles and making steady progress in happiness and wisdom. Towards this end he laboured hard, directed by one guiding principle of laying down the fundamentals of a "new science" whose knowledge held the key to all of humankind's problems. Miranda, Rivadavia, Bolivar, Santander, Jose de Valle and Andrade were Bentham's disciples, adopting and implementing his principles in the constitutions of their respective countries in South America. Edward Livingston, the outstanding American codifier, described Bentham as one man, both in ancient and modern times, to have thrown light on the science of legislation.

Bentham befriended and corresponded with Rammohan Roy. Rammohan himself picked up from Bentham the rejection of the natural rights theory and the distinction between law and morals. He was also influenced by the principles of Utilitarianism. But unlike Bentham, who was more rigid, Rammohan accepted a wider variety with regard to principles governing different societies. Besides, Rammohan was an ardent champion of freedom of the press, for that would promote freedom to think and express, and thus anticipated many of the arguments of J.S. Mill on the importance of liberty in a modern liberal society.

Bentham was a compulsive writer and a reviser. He would constantly get diverted from his study to clarify something written earlier. One of his contemporaries remarked that he could not play a game of badminton without attempting to redesign the shuttlecock:

> Bentham himself was always of a practical bent, not wanting to weave fantastical schemes but to get actual proposals into effect. His great propensity for detail gives some of his proposals a mad or impractical aura. He could not design a poorhouse without designing the inmate's hats; similarly he could not design an electoral system without planning the size of the ballot box.

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As a result, many of Bentham's works remained incomplete, and very few got published. This constant reworking made it difficult to establish the textual integrity of his thought, which became evident while reading the actual manuscript and the published work by his nineteenth-century editor, Bowring. Another related problem was the difficulty in discerning Bentham's original ideas from those of his followers, who invoked his name for much that they conceived.

Bentham died on June 6, 1832.

9.2 Meaning of Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism as a school of thought dominated English political thinking from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth. Some of the early Utilitarians were Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), Hume, Helvetius, Priestly, William Paley (1743-1805), and Beccaria. But it was Bentham who systematically laid down its theory, and made it popular on the basis of his innumerable proposals for reform. "Bentham's merit consisted, not in the doctrine, but in his vigorous application of it to various practical problems".

Through James Mill, Bentham developed close links with Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) and David Ricardo (1772-1838), getting acquainted with the ideas of the Classical economists. This group collectively styled themselves as Philosophic Radicals, with the aim of transforming England into a modern, liberal, democratic, constitutional, secular, and market state. Utilitarianism was used interchangeably with philosophic radicalism, individualism, laissez faire and administrative nihilism.

> Only in England, which throughout the nineteenth century was the most highly industrialized country in the world, did liberalism achieve the status at once of a national philosophy and a national policy. Here, contrary to the expectation implied by Marxism, it provided the principles for an orderly and peaceful transition, first to complete freedom for industry and the enfranchisement of the middle class and ultimately to the enfranchisement of the working class and their protection against the most serious hazards of industry. This was possible because the cleavage between social and economic classes in England never coincided exactly with the lines between political parties. Even in its earlier stage, when its economic theories in particular represented clearly the interest of industrialists, English liberalism in intention at least was always a theory of the general good of the whole national community... . It was the Philosophical Radicals, however, who provided the intellectual structure of early liberalism and therefore its programme.

The basic premise of Utilitarianism was that human beings as a rule sought happiness, that pleasure alone was good, and that the only right action was that which produced the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Bentham and the Utilitarians reiterated the ideas of the Greek thinker Epicures, who had stated that individuals sometimes pursued pleasure wisely and at other times unwisely.

In the hands of Bentham, the pleasure-pain theory evolved into a scientific principle to be applied to the policies of the state, welfare measures and for administrative, penal and legislative reforms. He shared Machiavelli's concern for a science of politics, not in the sense of understanding the dynamics of political power, but in the hope of promoting and securing the happiness of individuals through legislation and policies.

Utilitarianism provided a psychological perspective on human nature, for it perceived human beings as creatures of pleasure. Using the yardstick of utility, Bentham and his followers desired the restructuring of government and legal institutions so as to maximize individual happiness. In the process, they realized the imperative need to codify laws, making them instruments of reform and happiness.

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Bentham was confident that his utilitarian principles could be the basis of law. At one point, he even advertised that he could draw up a new code of law for any nation on earth, cutting across diverse cultural and psychological contexts. In *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Bentham wrote:

> Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what shall we do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while ... the principle of utility recognizes this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and law.

Bentham contended that human beings by nature were hedonists. Each of their actions was motivated by a desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Every human action had a cause and a motive. "Take away all pleasures and all pain and you have no desire and without a desire there can be no action" (Bentham ibid: 40). The principles of utility recognized this basic psychological trait, for it "approves or disapproves every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question ... not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government".

Bentham viewed hedonism not only as a principle of motivation, but also as a principle of action. He listed 14 simple pleasures and 12 simple pains, classifying these into self-regarding and other-regarding groups, a distinction that J.S. Mill borrowed in elaboration of the concept of liberty. Only two, benevolence and malevolence, were put under other-regarding action. Under self-regarding motives, Bentham listed physical desire, pecuniary interest, love of power and self-preservation. Self-preservation included fear of pain, love of life and love of ease.

In addition to these, Bentham also laid down social and dissocial categories. The social category was subdivided into social and semi-social. Social motive based on goodwill was associated with the pleasure and pain of sympathy, the pleasure and pain that an individual derived from contemplating the (un)happiness of others, without being affected personally. Semi-social motives included the love for regulations, the desire for amity, and a feeling for religion. Each had a social connotation, namely the overall happiness of others, but these were primarily self-regarding. The dissocial motive was essentially one of displeasure, associated with the pleasure and pain of antipathy and resentment. For Bentham, there was an interest corresponding to every motive.

Bentham described four sanctions or sources of pain and pleasure. The first of these was physical sanction: the source of constraints which arose from human nature and natural circumstances. The second was political and legal sanction: the source of constraints was in the form of rewards and punishments that were meted out by the political authority. The third was moral or popular sanction, meaning the influence(s) on individual behaviour exerted by collective opinion, or by the (dis) approval of those the person was in contact with. The fourth and final sanction was religious sanction, stemming from the hope of divine rewards or the fear of divine punishment.

Bentham was confident that a society in which the individual tried to maximize his *own happiness* would be far better than one in which he had to maximize the happiness of others. In this context, he believed that Christianity placed excessive reliance on altruism, for if the precepts of Jesus were taken literally, that would lead to the destruction of society. Like Epicures, Bentham regarded security as the ideal. For Bentham, security preceded liberty. They were both anti-religion. Bentham's dislike, or even hostility, towards religion, and the Church of England in particular, was because of his awareness of the superstitious and irrational side of human nature. It was for this reason that he regarded religion as an enemy of reason. In this, he voiced the views of the mainstream

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eighteenth-century philosophers. He was convinced that every reasonable person would accept the principle of the greatest happiness as a basis of society. He also expected that each individual would pursue his own happiness rather than something else. To tell the individual to behave differently, contrary to one's disposition; would be futile.

Bentham realized that a self-interested person would perform his duties, as his main concern was in discerning factors influencing particular behaviour. He refused to be judgemental about human behaviour and action per se. He hoped to provide the legislator with an exhaustive list of pleasures and pains, motives and sanctions, and factors that influenced human conduct and behaviour, with the purpose of changing social arrangements and individual actions. Bentham emphasized the fact that the individual either pursued his happiness without hurting anyone, or pursued actions that were actually conducive to the happiness of others. The legislator on his part, through rewards and punishment, could secure such behaviour, so as to ensure that the stock of happiness in the community did not diminish.

Bentham was sanguine that an adult individual was the best judge of his own happiness, fully capable of pursuing it without harming the happiness of others. He saw an integral link between the happiness of an individual and that of the community, and offered the principle of utility as a yardstick to a legislator to frame laws in order to obtain the overall happiness and welfare of the community. He repeatedly stressed that a person's actions and policies had to be judged by his intention to promote the happiness of the community. The end and the goal of legislation was to follow the rule, "each is to count for one and no one for more than one", suggesting that in spite of his repeated emphasis on the community, his was essentially an individualistic philosophy, for he understood social community as a fictitious body of individuals. He was concerned with the *distribution* of happiness as much as the *amount* of it.

Bentham distinguished pleasures quantitatively rather than qualitatively, regarding pushpin as good as poetry. He did not differentiate between pleasures, and in that sense he was not an elitist. He did not assign any inherent grading to activities and treated them at par in terms of their contribution to individual happiness. Interestingly, Rawls, though a critic of Benthamite Utilitarianism, retained Bentham's outlook in judging human contentment and excellence by asserting that even an individual who enjoyed counting the blades of grass was essentially fulfilling his moral nature.

In his desire to emulate Newton Bentham laid down principles in morals and legislation. By doing so, he disproved Burke's assertion that a "science of politics did not and could not exist" (Doyle 1963: 231). He was convinced that pleasures and pains could be measured mathematically by taking into consideration factors like intensity, duration, certainty and propinquity or remoteness. Such a formula was called the "felicific calculus". Bentham conceived the principle of utility as having the same status in the moral world, as axioms in geometry have in the world of mathematics. This was because Arithmetic, as noted by Hobsbawn, was the fundamental tool of the Industrial Revolution and for Bentham and his followers happiness was the object of policy. Every man's pleasure could be expressed (at least in theory) as a quantity and so could his pain. Deduct the pain from the pleasure and the net result was his happiness. Add the happiness of all men and deduct the unhappiness, and the government which secured the greatest happiness of the greatest number was the best. The accountancy of humanity would produce its debit and credit balance, like that of business" (Hobsbawn 1968: 79).

He taught men to govern by the simple rule of the "greatest happiness of the greatest number" which, in practice, could be discovered by a "felicific calculus". Thus, he sought to establish an external standard, mathematically calculable, whereby to measure the legislator's accomplishment. His contention was that he had made legislative reform a matter not of "caprice" or of unenlightened benevolence, but of logic (Bronowski and Mazlish 1960: 431).

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Curiously, the phrase "greatest happiness of the greatest number" used for the first time in 1776, and frequently associated with Bentham, did not reappear for the next 40 years. Though he did not invent the phrase, he was undoubtedly its best popularizer. Initially, he used the phrase "greatest happiness of all", which he gave up, for it suggested that the interests of some could be subordinated to those of others. It also implied that the happiness of the majority was all that mattered. If the suffering of one person was greater than the accumulated happiness of many, that was not acceptable. Therefore, he substituted the phrase with "greatest happiness of the greatest number", using it with greater frequency in the 1820s in his crusade for radical reforms. Bentham was categorical that since persons differed very little in their capacity to experience pain and pleasure, they had to be treated equally in a manner that gave their pleasures due regard and consideration. In fact, Bentham was not happy about the word "utilitarian", but continued to use it for want of any other alternate and effective word. For a while, he thought of using 'eudaimonologist' or 'felicist'.

Bentham remained convinced throughout his life on the science of legislation, retaining his belief that an expert legislator could skillfully legislate with a view to ensuring the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In order to do this, a legislator should be able to understand human actions and encourage those with appropriate sanctions that could contribute to the greatest happiness.

> The medieval conception of the magistrate administering the law of God by a system of rewards and punishments according to a divine scale of good and evil reappeared in Bentham's philosophy in the guise of a legislator determining good and evil according to the criterion of human happi-ness now accurately ascertained by scientific methods.

Bentham also discussed indirect legislation, namely public instruction and propaganda, through which the legislator could influence human conduct, strengthen moral or popular sanction (i.e. general opinion), and change people's behaviour via their love for reputation. "Since according to Bentham 'society' was nothing but a convenient fiction for an aggregate of individuals, the recipe for success consisted of knowing how to manage 'others'. A man must keep well with public opinion" (Wolin 1960: 346). For instance, drunkenness and idleness, which caused crime, could be tackled by promoting the consumption of non-alcoholic drinks, cultivating innocent amusements like gardening, music, athletic and sedentary games.

Unemployment could be prevented by providing for public works. In this, he was a predecessor of Keynes. Moreover, the love of reputation in a human being could be cultivated by inculcating the value of virtue through stories and literary works that presented good in attractive and vice in ugly terms. Bentham's schemes of the panopticon, and the National Charity Company aimed to balance the claims of humanity with those of the economy, to ensure human welfare without incurring heavy expenses, wastage, inefficiency and patronage.

Besides laws and indirect legislation, Bentham regarded private ethics as the third mode of influencing human behaviour. Its purpose was not to judge or arbitrate morals, but to teach and instruct individuals to maximize their own happiness. In this context, he suggested the use of a savings bank or General Goodwill Fund, where acts of beneficence that did not benefit the agent could be deposited and from which they could be withdrawn in due course. Unlike the moralists, Bentham did not emphasize the need to make sacrifices with a view to promoting general happiness. In general, he recommended economy of sacrifice. Though one could argue that it was desirable to sacrifice a lesser quantity of happiness for attaining a greater quantity, it was equally true that a large amount of happiness would remain intact if less quantity was sacrificed. Bentham's view of human nature was guided by a favourite statement from Helvetius, that "to love one's fellowmen, one must not expect much from them".

Bentham regarded punishments as both reformatory and deterring, controlling the actions of human beings. Fond of moral arithmetic, and for the purpose of laying down ground rules, he stated nine points. By stating these simple ground rules, Bentham hoped that they would become guidelines for both legislators and judges.

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The nine points were as follows:

1. The punishment must be great enough to outweigh the profit of the offence to the offender.
2. The greater the mischief of the offence, the greater the punishment should be.
3. and (4) are corollaries of (2).
5. Punishment should never be greater than the least amount required to make it effective.
6. The sensibility of the offender must always be taken into account.
7. The more uncertain it was that the offender would suffer it, the greater the punishment should be.
8. The more distant it was, the greater it should be.
9. If the offence was of a kind likely to be habitual with the offender, the punishment should be increased to outweigh the profit not only of the immediate offence but also of the other offences probably committed with impunity.

Bentham's concern to define punishment as precisely as possible, to establish a definite ratio between the degree of punishment and the magnitude of the crime, emanated from the hope of confining pain as narrowly as possible by making it more objective.

Bentham's defence of the principles of utility led him to plead a case for democracy, manhood, and later on universal suffrage, including female enfranchisement. Suffrage and democracy were crucial for the realization of the greatest happiness principle. In his *Plan for Parliamentary Reform*, he contended that community interest would emerge the moment the government took cognizance of the people, for they would not wish to be governed badly, nor would they desire a sacrifice of universal interest for something narrow and sectarian.

It was for this reason that Bentham supported universal suffrage, for it not only safeguarded people's interests, but also checked governmental abuse of that interest. Universal suffrage would make governments more accountable and less whimsical. As a result, he drafted a complete scheme of parliamentary democracy in his *Constitutional Code*, pleading for secret ballot, delineating a scheme for elementary, secondary and technical public education, and rejecting plural voting. He was convinced that a good government was possible only by what he called the "democratic ascendancy". He recognized that misrule in England was due to many reasons, including defects in the electoral system. He was equally concerned with the need to explore and combat methods by which the "subject many" were not dominated by the "ruling few". In *Church and Englandism*, he attacked the established church as a close ally of the political elite, for it taught intellectual submissiveness among its followers.

From 1809 to 1823, Bentham devoted his time and energies to weeding out religious beliefs and practices, and eventually religion from the minds of individuals. He was an atheist and a denouncer of organized religion. He subjected religious doctrines, rituals and practices to the test of utility, and found them inadequate, reconfirming his atheism and his desire to build a rational society according to secular notions. He confidently and out rightly denied the truth of religion, of the existence of an-immortal soul, of a future life and of the existence of God. Here, he was influenced by his radical friend Francis Place (1771-1854). He had immense faith and confidence in the power of reason to tell us what was, and what was to be expected. In this, he was influenced by the thinkers of the French Enlightenment (Voltaire, Helvetius and Paul Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789)), and like them, believed that in order to recreate it was necessary to destroy. His hatred for religion, like Voltaire, increased with the passage of time. He was anti-clergy and disagreed with religion as an instrument of moral improvement. Like Holbach, he regarded religion as a source of human misery.

Bentham sought to use the institutions of conventional religion to serve secular ends and public service. He advocated that the clergy could serve as disseminators regarding job vacancies, or

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compile statistics to aid endeavours at poor relief. The church could be used as a bank for the poor after the Sunday services. The clergy could become moral instructors in the panopticon. He believed that people had a right by law to leave their bodies for dissection.

In a secular utilitarian society, there would be no God and no idea of an immortal soul. There would be no supernatural sanction for morality. A good deed would be remembered for one's family and commemorated by one's fellow citizens. Instead of religious rewards and punishments, there would be verdict by future generations, renewable every century in the case of great men.

9.3 The Modern State

Bentham regarded the notion of a modern state as an ideal, an aspiration, and examined the techniques of state building and methods that would promote modernization. He regarded diversity and fragility within political order as inevitable. For Bentham, the state was a legal entity with individualism as its ethical basis. He was categorical that modernization required two things: first, it needed a broad-based and diversified legal system which would take into account individuals' desires; and second, institutions that would support the legal system, namely bureaucratization of public service and legislation as a continual process, accommodating both change and diversity. Bentham characterized the state as a legal entity, with individualism as its ethical basis. "Bentham's theory brought together in a particular way the two great themes of modern political thought: individualism and the modern sovereign state".

Bentham preserved the individualist notion of moral autonomy, with priority to individual interests. He also recognized that these autonomous individuals, governed by their interests, constituted themselves into fragile groupings which the state had to maintain through discipline and cohesion, if it had to be an effective body. Through institutions and other techniques, the community was made responsive to the state, but the state was not allowed to trample on individual interests and wills. It would have to *protect* them by getting the individuals involved in the state through consent, or by representing them as masters and judges of the state's actions. Bentham thought of ideas and devices to guarantee governmental protection of individual interests, namely that public happiness should be the object of public policy, government was a trust (as it was in the case of Locke), with legislation as the primary function, and that uniformity, clarity, order and consistency were essential to both law and order. He was equally conscious of the need for institutional safeguards to ensure that the government pursued public interest. He contended that the reason for misrule was that the government was controlled by those whose interests it was to perpetuate bad governance. This could be changed if people who desired good government were made to take charge.

Bentham was confident that representation would ensure congruence between the interests of the government and those of the community as a whole. It was for this reason that he championed universal adult franchise, and as early as 1790 recommended it to all those who could read the list of voters. His association with James Mill, whom he met in 1809, reinforced his intrinsic faith in democracy.

As opposed to natural rights and natural law, Bentham recognized legal laws and rights that were enacted and enforced by a duly constituted political authority or the state. A state was sovereign, being primarily a law making body. He defined the state or political society as:

> a number of persons (whom we may style subjects) are supposed to be in the habit of paying obedience to a person, or an assemblage of, persons, of a known and certain description (whom we may call governor or governors) such persons altogether (subjects and governed) are said to be in a state of political society.

Bentham defined law as the command of the sovereign. He considered the powers of the sovereign as indivisible, unlimited, inalienable and permanent. His views on sovereignty were reiterated

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by Austin, though the latter's *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (1832) contained a more rigid statement on sovereignty than the one provided by Bentham (Plamentaz 1966: 65). Benfham's theory (unlike that of Austin) was more sophisticated, for it took into account factors like federalism and written constitutions. Austin's theory, on the contrary, was legalistic.

Bentham, unlike Austin and Hobbes, did not think that the powers of the sovereign were to be unlimited or illimitable. Instead, he dismissed talk of illegality of actions of government as absurd, unless it was possible to limit these actions by conventions. He did not define law in terms of statute, and accepted the division of sovereignty as in federal systems. He also envisaged the possibility of constitutional law, for morality and religion bound the sovereign's power.

Bentham's greatest contribution was in the field of jurisprudence and government (Sabine 1973: 617). He was critical of Blackstone for regarding tradition as sacrosanct, conferred by time as the basis of law. He opposed the delays in laws, the obscurity and incomprehensibility in its language, its arbitrariness, the undue expenses that it entailed, and the cruel punishments that were recommended as a remedy. Instead of law being a product of the judiciary, contributing to its ambiguity, he wanted it to be carefully drawn and coherently spelt out by a legislature, giving little scope for judicial interpretation and elaboration. The codification of the law had to be such that it would be understood by an average individual. One basic reform that he suggested was replacement of lawyers' fees by salaries, for that would stop endless litigation. He tried to introduce an informal, inexpensive and simple procedure in law courts. He recommended oral testimony and cross-examination before a judge in a public court. He advocated that the proceedings of these courts should be modelled in a way a father conducted his inquiries within a family when there was a dispute or a feud to settle. He emphasized that everyone who was likely to know about a case, and in particular the parties, should be heard. Punishment was to be in accordance with the consequence of the crime, namely the number of people affected by it. If the social pain was less, then the punishment should be less severe.

Like Montesquieu, Bentham argued that a legislator should take into cognizance factors like people's customs, prejudices, religion and traditions while codifying the law. In 1811, he wrote to US President Madison, offering to draw up a comprehensive code for the United States, and in 1814 made a similar offer to Alexander I of Russia. From 1824 to 1832, he wrote *Constitutional Code*, outlining a new system of English government. A substantive part of it became the basis of the 1832 Reform Bill. It was for this reason that in 1844 the *Westminster Review* rightly proclaimed that "we live in an age of Benthamism".

Bentham stipulated happiness, and not liberty, as the end of the state. The state was a contrivance created for fulfilling the needs of the individual. In order to promote happiness, he recommended the need to establish Poor Laws, construct hospitals for the indigent, create workhouses for the unemployed, levy taxes for the purpose of redistribution, decrease direct taxes, recompense victims of crime for damages when the perpetrator was an indigent, safeguard national security, establish courts and internal police, disseminate useful information to industry, label poisonous substances, guarantee marks for quality and quantity of goods, set a maximum price for corn, provide security and subsistence by stockpiling grain or giving granary bouts to producers, encourage investments in times of unemployment, grant patents to inventors, regulate banks, establish and enforce government monopoly on the issue of paper currency, engage in public works to make the unemployed work, establish boards, institutes, universities and savings banks, provide cheap postage, appoint a public prosecutor, and support the selection of the young against the interference and asceticism of the old.

Bentham was categorical that a government and a state had to be judged by their usefulness to the individual. He also insisted on a need for a watchful and interested government, which would readily and willingly act whenever and wherever necessary for the happiness of the individual. Sovereignty rested with the people, and had to be exercised by what he called the "constitutive

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authority", i.e. the electorate. The task of a sovereign was to harmonize different individual interests and promote social cooperation through legislation in form of punishment, rewards, encouragement and incentives.

In his *Constitutional Code*, Bentham granted the power to the people to select and dismiss their rulers, and to ensure that the interests of the rulers were closely linked with those of the people. Towards this, he recommended the abolition of monarchy and the House of Lords, checks on legislative authority, unicameralism, secret ballot, annual elections, equal electoral districts, annual parliaments and election of the prime minister by the parliament. He also recommended the need for central inspection, a public prosecutor, recruitment of the young in the government, and competitive civil service examinations.

The idea behind annual elections was to maximize aptitude and minimize expenses, in order to ensure high-quality officials and representatives. The threat of dismissal would ensure accountability and responsibility. Unlike James Mill, Bentham insisted on a code of penal sanctions, and attached considerable importance to public opinion. Bentham accepted that democracies would also be subject to the "iron law of oligarchy", and that government would always be that of the many by the few, but there was nothing negative about this, for it ensured representation and expertise.

Bentham viewed representative government as a solution to the problem that Plato raised, namely finding experts to rule. He accepted that all individuals could be corrupted. The only precaution was to give power to the people, for that would ensure the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Like Plato, he accepted that governing was a skill, and that all were not capable of ruling, which was why representatives were needed. Democracy ensured good rule and control of governors.

Bentham rejected the idea of mixed or balanced constitutions representing interests, which was central to the Whig view as exemplified by Burke. This was because interests change, and with it representation would also change. The Utilitarians proposed representation of the people. Everyone as an individual had the right to be represented, and therefore should have the right to vote. In A *Fragment on Government*, Bentham used the criterion of circumstances to distinguish between a free and a despotic government. Free government depended:

> ... on the manner in which that whole mass of power, which taken together, is supreme, is in a free state, distributed among the several ranks of persons that are sharers in it: on the source from whence their titles to it are successively derived: on the frequent and easy changes of condition between governors and governed; whereby the interests of one class are more or less indistinguishably blended with those of the other: on the responsibility of the governors; or the right which a subject has of having the reasons publicly assigned and canvassed of every act of power that is exerted over him: on the liberty of press; or the security with which every man, be he of the one class or the other, may make known his complaints and remonstrances to the whole community: on the liberty of public association; or the security with which malcontents may communicate their sentiments, construct their plans, and practice every mode of opposition short of actual revolt, before the executive power can be legally justified in disturbing them (Bentham 1977: 485).

Interestingly, Bentham opposed the concept of division of powers for three reasons. First, he argued that if the rulers were already accountable to the people, there was no need for additional checks. Division of power by itself did not secure and protect constitutional liberty. Second, even with the division of power, it was possible to replace majority rule with that of a minority. This was because divisions would give the minorities the right to veto legislation. He could foresee evil consequences in the displacement of majority rule. Third, he argued that in the absence of effective opposition, division of power would be redundant. He emphasized the importance of accountability

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of the rulers, instead of division of powers, as not only good in itself, but also good as a means of constitutional liberty.

It was during the French Revolution that Bentham developed his theory of constitutional government. Impressed by the strides made by American democracy with its broad-based suffrage and security of property, he was convinced of the inherent value of democracy, hoping that England would take a leaf from the American experience. He regarded constitutional representative democracy as an overall political arrangement safeguarded by measures like widespread suffrage, an elected assembly, frequent elections, freedom of the press and of association as a guarantee against misrule. It would also protect the individual from arbitrary and despotic governments. He regarded constitutional democracy as being relevant "to all nations and all governments possessing liberal opinions" (Bentham 1983: 1). Initially he desired to make Britain a republic but after witnessing the excesses of the horrors of the French Revolution he was cautious about recommending the abolition of the monarchy.

Bentham doubted the efficacy of a revolution to ensure individual and political emancipation. He insisted on gradual change, based on the overall security of the individual in society. He was enthused initially by the impetus of the French Revolution, seeing in it a hope for his reform proposals and the panopticon scheme. But subsequently he himself was disappointed at the turn of events in France, which led to violence and the "reign of terror".

Bentham urged a more universal and centralized system to register births, marriages and deaths, inspiring the 1836 Registration Act in England. He also suggested that the government should undertake responsibility in matters like education, care of the insane, and provide protection against intentional offences and accidental dangers. He recommended a Preventive Service Minister to mitigate calamities like floods, epidemics, landslides and conflagrations, by providing fire-fighting equipment, enforcing fire regulations and other safety measures in factories and mines, survey bridges, dykes, and embankments, and undertaking repair or demolition of unsafe buildings. He recommended the establishment of a permanent police, separate ministers for education, health and "indigence relief. He sought assurance for adequate and uncontaminated drinking water, hospitals to take care of the sick, vaccination during epidemics, and proper drainage and sewage systems. It was for these recommendations that Joe Roebuck spoke of the silent revolution that became largely possible due to the diffusion of Bentham's ideas.

Bentham's followers helped in the founding of the Anti-Corn Law Association in 1836. Many of them invoked his name to legitimize their cause. Bowring and Archibald Prentice, a Manchester journalist and an admirer of Bentham, praised his monumental efforts towards the Corn Law agitation, describing him as the "father of practical free traders". Benthamite civil functionaries like Edwin Chadwick and James Key-Shuttleworth introduced the principles of central control and inspection. They enacted the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829, the Education Act of 1833, the Factory Act of 1833, the New Poor Law Act of 1834, the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, the Act for Scientific System of Vital Statistics in 1836, the Railway Regulation Act of 1840 and the Public Health Act of 1848. Appropriately and rightly, he "furnished the philosophic banner under which the 'legislative revolution' was carried on".

9.4 Economic Ideas

Bentham appreciatively read the works of Smith, a champion of free trade. He considered Smith "a writer of great and distinguished merit", pointing to the similarities between the views of Smith with those of his own, as expressed in *Manual of Political Economy* (1793-1795). Like Smith, Bentham defended laissez faire-ism but pleaded for the government's non-interference in regulating interest rates in his *Defence of Usury* (1787). This was seen by many as criticizing Smith from an extreme laissez faire position as the one articulated by Smith. Smith evidently suggested that interest rates should not be determined by market forces alone.

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Bentham's laissez faire leanings were clear in his criticism of active and interventionist foreign policy. In 1789, he maintained that international harmony among people was possible only if existing economic interdependence was recognized and accepted, for people would then realize the truths of political economy. He was categorical that as in political economy, even in foreign affairs, the government should observe "the great secret and do nothing". While Smith defended laissez faire by appealing to the guiding hand of providence, Bentham justified it on the grounds of utility.

Though Bentham was a defender of laissez faire and free trade, it would be misleading to conclude that he stood for a non-interventionist government and a minimal state. He was not a dogmatic laissez faireist. He believed that government was an undeniable evil, but the evil could be minimized if it could be used for the production of happiness, which meant security, abundance, subsistence and equality identified as its ends. Of these four ends, security and subsistence were regarded as the most important, while abundance and equality were "manifestly of inferior importance". He linked these ends with the proposals of Smith, and the result was a welfare state with free education, guaranteed employment, minimum wages, sickness benefit and old age insurance.

Bentham contended that there could be neither abundance nor equality without security, and therefore the chief concern of the law was to ensure security. Without some assurance that property would be protected, individuals would not strive to create new wealth. According to Bentham, the fundamental institution of private property was itself "only a foundation of expectation". He regarded the concept of expectation as a distinctive quality in human beings, for it played a significant role in determining his decisions. Therefore, the purpose of the law was to secure expectations, for it was a precondition not only to peace of mind and to the pleasure of anticipation, but also to any general plan of conduct or forward looking activity. It was also the basic precondition for economic enterprise and investment:

> So crucial to liberal mind was the sense of secure expectations that ultimately the satisfaction of expectations was identified with justice. In Bentham's jurisprudence justice was defined as the "disappointment-preventing principle" and the whole system of civil law was dedicated to the exclusion of disappointment.

Bentham was equally convinced that the mass of the national wealth would increase if the wealth of individuals increased, for, like Smith, he too believed that each person being the best judge of his own interests would be most effective in producing it. He contended that government inaction was required with regard to subsistence and economic abundance, for that would give the individual freedom to pursue the best economic opportunities. Equality was problematic, for in the process of equalizing the fortunes of the wealthy, it might stifle individual initiative. Moreover, security preceded equality, for the pain that would be produced by social levelling would be more than the pleasures of those whose position was alleviated. He was consistent in seeing economic levelling as being impractical. To establish equality on a permanent basis was to undermine not only security and abundance, but also subsistence, for that would subvert individual initiative.

Interestingly, Bentham insisted that a government should provide for subsistence for the indigent through public works projects. He also proposed a system of agricultural communes and industry houses to take care of the indigent, as distinguished from the working poor. Under both projects, through strict supervision the indigent would be encouraged to become a part of the normal labour market as soon as possible. Care was to be taken to ensure that the lot of the indigent was not more beneficial than of those who were poor, for that would amount to rewarding shirkers, becoming a positive disincentive to the industrious poor.

Rawls, in his *A Theory of Justice* (1971), reiterated the Benthamite principle of ensuring a fair and just system, whereby both the free riders and the shirkers were not allowed to take advantage of the system. Through his principle of fair equality of opportunity, the industrious individual and his contributions to society were safeguarded, while the difference principle cared for those below

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the accepted social minimum, thus ensuring pro-ductivity and efficiency of the economy without being callous and heartless.

Bentham insisted that workers in the free market were to receive higher wages than those in the industry houses, with the permission to spend freely, something that would be denied to the indigent. The government would be restrained from providing for the indigent by making available non-alcoholic beverages, uniform dress and any other rules which in its own judgement, were conducive to the benefit of either a particular individual or the community at large, at whose expense he was to be relieved.

Bentham demanded a ceiling on the price of grain during shortages, favoured protection of small groups of producers and desired government action to control inflation. He contended that whenever it could be proved and shown that the advantages accrued from interference outweighed the costs, the measure should be regarded as good rather than bad. While he preferred an interventionist state in a backward country, he was generally for private enterprise in advanced countries. He favoured an attentive and active government, and as long as the government promoted happiness, he did not fear the horrible hand of the government. Government interference was not as abhorrent as its negligence. He repeatedly asserted that it was "incumbent on government to make sure that the community pursued courses of actions conducive to the maximum well being".

In fact, it was not until 1801 that the first elementary census data were available in England. The second obstacle was the inertia and apathy of the British bureaucracy. The third reason was the ambiguity of the meaning of the principle of utility. He kept expanding the phrase and redefining its fundamental tenets. The principle of utility was rephrased as the "greatest happiness principle", and subsequently as the "universal self-preference principle" and "interest function prescribing principle":

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Bentham was the first to realize the difficulties in applying the principle of utility to social and political problems. After slogging for 10 years in trying to collect correct statistics for the gross national income, tax revenues, and agricultural production, he realized the complete unavailability of reliable economic and social statistics in the late eighteenth century.

> He was no longer so assured of the infallibility of his hypotheses; he was no longer so confident of the parallel between the physical and moral sciences, Newton and Bentham. Yet he did not give up the expectation of founding a new moral discipline, a unique conjunction of art and science.

9.5 Notion of Liberty, Rights and Law

Bentham defined liberty as absence of restraints and coercion. Fundamental to his concept of liberty was the idea of security linking his idea of civil and political liberty. A legislator established a framework of security through law, within which the individual enjoyed liberty. At the level of civil law, a legislator secured right to property, prevented interference, simplified judicial proceedings and encouraged healthy commercial competitiveness. In the realm of criminal law, a legislator protected the individual against crime through a system of a rational criminal code, a strong effective police force and a judiciary. At the level of constitutional law, a legislator guaranteed against misrule, abuse and arbitrary exercise of power.

For Bentham, the principle of utility provided the objective moral standard noticeably different from other theories that supplied purely subjective criteria. Like Burke, he was particularly scathing

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in his criticism of the concepts of natural law and natural rights. Like Hume, he criticized these notions on pragmatic and conceptual levels. But, unlike Hume, he had immense faith in the power of reason, regarding it as a guardian and director of morals. He dismissed natural law as "nothing but a phrase". It lacked substance.

Since law sprang from human will, law-making (like human conduct) would have to be evaluated in its capacity to promote happiness. From this point of view, a jurist had two duties, one to find out the effects and consequences of the existing laws on society. Second, to devise the implications of utility in a given situation of a given society and frame rules, procedures, schemes and institutions for actualizing these demands, and persuade sovereigns to give effect to the proposals as part of their sanctioned commands.

On normative grounds, Bentham pointed out that natural rights impelled an individual to rise up in arms against whatever one did not like. Talk of natural rights and natural law, he contended, was like using "terrorist language". It incited a "spirit of resistance to all laws—a spirit of resistance against all governments" encouraging chaos and disorder. On a conceptual plane, he dismissed the notion of natural rights as mischievous and "simply nonsense upon stilts", for "there is no such thing as natural rights opposed to, in contradiction to legal" (Bentham 1965: 500, 501).

Bentham dismissed natural rights as nonsense for two reasons. First, they did not mean anything. His dismissal of natural rights as meaningless was similar to the arguments of the Vienna Circle when they claimed that theology and metaphysics lacked meaning (Waldron 1987: 34). Second, the sentences of the natural rights text guaranteed their falsity. Like Hobbes, he was insistent that words be defined precisely and clearly, for ambiguity and confusion contributed to much of the conflicts in politics. Accordingly, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1791) was purported to be the penning of a:

> ... cluster of truths on which the fate of nations was to hang, was in fact written more like an oriental tale or an allegory for a magazine... it contains stale epigrams, trite sentimental conceits and flippery ornaments rather than necessary destinations and the majestic simplicity of good sound sense.

Bentham regarded the principles of the Declaration as fallacious but not pernicious, as Burke did. Interestingly, like Burke who sympathized with the cause of the American colonies, Bentham too was less harsh on the American Declaration of Independence (1776). Both favoured change without undermining security, continuity and order. Neither was Bentham enamoured of Paine's logical defence of the Revolution. Bentham rejected natural rights and natural laws because of his conviction that every aspect of social phenomena could be calculated and measured mathematically by an expert and skillful legislator, becoming an instrument of happiness.

Like Burke, Bentham believed that rights were to be protected by existing laws, but he differed from Burke in his perception of English law. Unlike Burke, he was not so reverential about English law just because it was an "ancient collection of unwritten maxims and customs". Law, according to Bentham, had to be codified, simple, systematic and logical, based on the principle of the "greatest happiness of the greatest number".

Bentham's objections to natural rights was both philosophical and political. As a legal positivist of the command school Bentham could accept that statements about natural rights were even meaningful... . Rights were co-related with duties and to be under a duty was to be liable to sanctions in the event of failure to perform an action... . Bentham's political objection to natural rights was that they were in fact reactionary, and that their alleged existence retarded the application of science to social reform.

Interestingly, even though Bentham undermined the sanctity of natural rights formulations, he recognized the importance of rights as being crucial for the security of the individual. He rejected not only the idea of natural and inviolable right to property, but also the idea of absolute right to

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property, as the government had the right to interfere with property in order to ensure security. Bentham distinguished between sudden and critical attack on property from the fixed, regular and necessary deductions from the wealth of the people, which were needed to finance and support the functions and services rendered by governments. He defended the need for adequate compensation in case of a violation of the individual's right to property. Property was neither natural, absolute nor inviolable.

Bentham defined "right" and "duty" in the context of positive law. Unlike "right" and "duty", "law", "sovereign" and "sanctions" were concrete terms, for they were tangible and could be identified. "Right" and "duty" assumed sense only if translated into propositions about laws and sanctions. When one talked of duty, it implied an action by the sovereign on pain of some sanction. Talk of "right" meant the beneficiary of a "duty", meaning that one benefited from another's performance of an action which was required of him by a sovereign on pain of sanction. Right and law were correlative terms. Without a lawgiver there could be no law, no right and no duty. A natural right was like a son who never had a father.

Bentham applied his celebrated distinction between "descriptive" and "censorial" jurisprudence, namely what the law *ought* to be or whether a particular law was bad or good, to establish the validity of moral propositions about legal rights. It made sense if one contended that an individual ought to have a particular legal right. It became nonsensical when claimed that an individual already had some natural right in virtue of which the legal right was called for. Moreover, there could be no absolute claim to rights and liberties. There was need for some constraints, so, at best, one could speak of a clearly qualified commitment to liberty, property, democracy, and so on:

> In vain would it be said, that though no bounds are here assigned to any of these rights, yet it is to be understood as taken for granted and tacitly admitted and assumed that they are to have bounds; viz. such bounds as it is understood will be set them by the laws. Vain, I say, would be this apology; for the supposition would be contradictory to the express declaration of the article itself... . It would be self-contradictory, because these rights are, in the same breath in which their existence is declared, declared to be imprescriptable; and imprescriptable ... means nothing unless ft excludes the interferences of the laws.

Once qualifications on rights were revealed, they undermined the initial thrust of the argument. There was a need to mention modifications and exceptions to rights by law.

Bentham believed that without positive law human life would be intolerable, insecure, dismal and miserable, resembling Hobbes' stale of nature. Law ensured security, society and economy. If the law itself was attacked, then it was likely to result in chaos and insecurity, similar to the Terror of the 1790s. In the background of this, it was imperative that irrespective of the way a government was established, nothing was to be done to undermine the fabric of the law. Furthermore, the happiness of the subjects was to be always kept in mind. Both these imperatives were ignored by the proponents of natural rights. Bentham found the natural rights argument distasteful, not because it was non-compliant, but because it encouraged rebellion, which was associated with anarchy, terror and insecurity—his primary concerns. He emphasized that disobedience and revolution were two different things.

Bentham was equally critical of the notion of equality of rights, for that ignored the distinctions that society had found useful to make. He also pointed out that the absolutism inherent in the doctrine of natural rights was based on the Utopian presumption that government could fulfil all aspirations.

The final reason for Bentham's indictment of natural rights was that they threatened social solidarity and attenuated selfishness in society.

The great enemies of public peace are the selfish and the dissocial passions—necessary as they are—the one to the very existence of each individual, the other to his security. On the part of these

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affections, a deficiency in point of strength is never to be apprehended: all that is to be apprehended in respect of them, is to be apprehended on the side of their excess. Society is held together only by the sacrifices that men can be induced to make of the gratifications they demand: to obtain these sacrifices is the great difficulty, the great task of government. What has been the object, the perpetual and palpable object, of this declaration of pretended rights. To add as much force as possible to these passions, but already too strong, to burst the cords that hold them in, to say to the selfish passions, there—everywhere—is your enemy. Such is the morality of this celebrated manifesto (Bentham ibid: 495).

Bentham, unlike Burke and Marx, identified self-interest as the core of human nature, but like them, visualized the possibility of human society depending on people pursuing interests other than those that were narrowly self-centred. All three attacked the natural rights doctrine on the premise that it sought to provide instant and unconditional gratification of purely selfish individual desires. They were not willing to organize a community exclusively on the principle of self-interest:

> Each of them offered a wider vision—the altruism of Bentham's principle of utility, the intergenerational wisdom of Burke's traditions and the cooperative fulfillment of Marxian species-being. For all of them, human life, to be bearable, involved a substantial commitment to living together in community that is belied by the abstract egoism of a theory of human rights.

Bentham also rejected the idea of the social contract as pure fiction, a falsehood, on the premise that the binding force of a contract came from a government, from the habit of enforcement and not vice versa. Following Hume, he dismissed the social contract as a chimera, a fiction never entered into. "The notion of an actually existing unconnected *state of nature* is too wild to be seriously admitted" (Bentham 1962: 36). He asserted that the social contract argument, along with the notion of natural law and natural rights, led us to an "unavoidable inference that all government... that have had any other origin ... are illegal" and "resistance to them and subversion of them, lawful and commendable" (Bentham 1965: 500, 501). For Bentham, the principle of utility provided the basis of all political and moral obligations.

9.6 Women and Gender Equality

Bentham argued for women's right to vote and the right to participate as equals in the government. In *Introduction*, he attacked the presumption that women should be accorded a subordinate status because of their inferior minds. Under the influence of Helvetius, Bentham paid attention to the needs of women. However, he was critical of Helvetius for condoning the practice in "certain barbarous or half civilized nations" where warriors were rewarded with favours of women. Interestingly, he tried to absolve Helvetius by alleging that perhaps "Montesquieu had led him into this error". Even then, Bentham commented that both Helvetius and Montesquieu were:

> ... philosophers distinguished for their humanity—both of them good husbands and good fathers—how could they have forgotten that favours not preceded by an uncontrolled choice and which the heart perhaps repelled with disgust afforded the spectacle rather of the degradation of woman than the rewarding a hero ... both of them were eloquent against slavery, how could they speak in praise of a law which supposes the slavery of the best half of the human species.

In his *Plan for Parliamentary Reform*, Bentham favoured women's suffrage, but in *Constitutional Code* he realized that though there was nothing wrong with women's suffrage, the time was not ripe for it. His reluctance was not because women lacked the capacity and rationality to vote, but because men would oppose it so stiffly that it could jeopardize the very cause. As for women's involvement in government, he felt it would lead to "nothing but confusion and ridicule". Bentham

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rejected the idea of women's enfranchisement and participation in government on the grounds that men were immature and would refuse to allow women amidst them. This had nothing to do with the fact that women lacked either talent or ability.

Bentham found no evidence to support the view that social inequality had its roots in natural inequality. Natural differences between men and women could not be the basis for oppressing women. If women appeared less fit for intellectual activities than men, it was because of their education, which from their early years was devoted to cultivating qualities like modesty, delicacy and chastity.

Bentham was equally sensitive to the marital and sexual rights of women. He argued for the right of a woman to obtain a divorce in case of an unhappy marriage. He dismissed the idea of an irrevocable marriage contract as "absurd and cruel". Like slaves, women were oppressed and not treated as autonomous individuals in society.

It was noteworthy that J.S. Mill reiterated a similar sentiment, and equated the position of women to that of slaves, and in some respects worse than that of slaves. The analogy between slaves and women appeared throughout Bentham's writings. In An Introduction, he perceived a close link between Aristotle's defence of slavery and his anti-women posture. Clearly Bentham, like Hobbes, had very little respect for classical antiquity. For Bentham, both women and slaves were oppressed, and their oppression was justified by prejudice. In 1789 he commented:

> As to the Negro and the Woman, were they by some strange accident to overcome the body of prejudice which opposes their admission with so much force, there could not be a stronger proof of a degree of merit superior to any that was to be found among whites and among men.

Bentham also lamented on the limited legal personality that English laws of his time conferred on women. He desired the removal of these laws, and of treating women's interests as separate from those of men, whether father, husband or son. Bentham attacked the practice of legal separation, for it would condemn persons to the "privations of celibacy" or "to form illicit connections". He contended that women had equal claims to happiness as men, if not more, because they were subject to physiological pains unique to their sex.

Bentham did not regard sexual differences between men and women as innate or natural. He was equally concerned about the plight of unwed mothers, their feminine delicacy and reputation, and devised the Sotimion along the lines of the Panopticon. He invented the Nothotropftium to take care of illegitimate children. He supported abortion and infanticide. He even pleaded for proper rules that would prevent a stronger mate from maltreating the weaker one in a marital relationship. He recommended severe punishment for those who perpetrated violence against women. He regarded prostitution as an evil but ruled out a legal ban as it would be useless and extremely harmful. He proposed short-term marriages for sailors and soldiers, so that their women would not be humiliated and their children would not be illegitimate. This was suggested as a remedial measure and not as a rule.

For Bentham, the question of autonomy—suffrage and divorce are two important issues that have an intimate link with women's legal personality. The two belonged to the public and private spheres respectively of the individual, and were based on the premise that women were aware of their interests and the means to safeguard them. The right to vote and the right to seek a divorce guaranteed and secured women's interests independent of men.

Thus while he himself stopped short of demanding radical changes in the status of women, he furnished the philosophy that inspired John Stuart Mill to take up the gauntlet for the cause of women in the Victorian era. Playing the role of gadfly, Bentham wrote, discussed and argued. In his day the time was not ripe, but he caused another generation to seek for women an end to the inequities he so eloquently described (Williford 1975: 176).

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Bentham also supported education for women, and proposed a new curriculum called *Christomathia* (1816). This formed the basis of the University College, the first English university to admit all students without discriminating on the basis of race, class, religion or sex. Education and suffrage would enable a woman to be a morally autonomous person and a politically enlightened citizen.

Ball disagreed with the lavish praise that was showered on Bentham for his pro-feminist views (Halvey 1928: 20; Mack 1962: 112; Williford 1975: 168). He pointed out that Bentham was regarded as pro-woman in the light of his critique of James Mill's *Essay on Government* (1820), written in the context of the debate leading up to the Reform Bill of 1832. Bentham fell out with James Mill in 1818, and since then had few kind words for his former associate and friend. The differences were personal, but they cast their shadow on his assessment of Mill's *Essay* (Ball 1980: 105).

Bentham, according to Ball, shelved his initial demand for enfranchisement of women and their political representation on the grounds of principle and practice. In practical terms, as pointed out, he realized that society was not yet receptive to his radical demand. In principle, he too believed that the home was the natural domain for the woman. Her nature was so constituted as to preclude rational political judgements and be prone to superstition. Women were subordinate to men because they were weaker. He also granted the man the right to be the guardian of his wife's interests, but rejected the idea of making them absolute masters. Women, because of their weakness or gentleness, could not be reduced to the position of slaves. He warned that at all costs the "dangerous snare" of "absolute equality" between the sexes was to be avoided. While J.S. Mill believed in sexual equality, Bentham did not entertain that possibility. "If on some occasions Bentham was an ambivalent feminist, he was, on many more, an ardent anti-feminist".

In his *Autobiography* (1873), J.S. Mill acknowledged the influence that Bentham had exerted on his thinking, giving sufficient reasons for projecting Bentham as a champion of women's causes. Curiously, he failed to mention his subsequent rejection of women's suffrage.

9.7 As a Humanist

Bentham was against colonialism, and argued that it was bad both for the colonizers and the colonies. He wanted England to create a "mass of happiness" by adopting the principle of self-government within the empire. In arguing on behalf of the colonial peoples, he was against the prevailing view in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which differentiated between "they" (colonized) and "us" (colonizers). He became interested in the Indian reform movement when James Mill became an official in the English East India Company. He inspired Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of India in 1827, to support and initiate reforms in India. In 1793, Bentham asked France to liberate its colonies.

Bentham, inspired by the reform proposals with regard to education, formed a committee and drew up plans to establish a school in London patterned on the ideas suggested by Bell and Lancaster. Bell, by training advanced students to teach younger schoolmates, hit upon an inexpensive method of education. This was the first practicable programme for extending education to the lower classes, and eventually abolishing illiteracy altogether. Though the idea never concretized, it enthused Bentham to write his *Christomathia*, a minute compendium on education, covering everything from a pupil's diet to an encyclopaedic table embracing all knowledge. In 1825, James Mill established the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge with a view to distributing cheap or free utilitarian tracts.

Bentham championed humane treatment of slaves and animals, favouring the abolition of slavery. He was against capital punishment. In line with his conviction that happiness was the motive force in human behaviour and action, he sketched an Encyclopaedical Tree as a master plan for all the arts and sciences in accordance with their contribution to human happiness. He contributed towards evolving an international language, by classifying 17 properties that were desirable in a

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language. He also outlined the principles of universal grammar. He coined new words like *international, codify, maximize, minimize, rationale, demoralize, deontology, eulogistic* and *false consciousness*. In spite of his dislike for Aristotle, he emphasized, like the ancient master, that mastery of language and the ability to use the right word were essential to serious thinking.

Bentham also suggested "Dialogues with the Dead" for their educational and theatrical value. He prepared snippets of conversations that could take place between Socrates and himself on the subject of happiness; with Bacon on the philosophical developments of the past 2000 years; with Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717-1783) on the Encyclopaedical Tree; with Etienne Dumont and Montesquieu on the law as it ought to be; with Locke on the fiction of the original social contract; with Porphyny, Locke and Bishop Sanderson on logic; and with Euclid, Appollonius, Diophantus, Newton and La Place on mathematics. He suggested that people should go to pilgrimages to the shrines of dead philosophers as opposed to pilgrimages to the shrines of saints and martyrs. He wanted religion, like political and legal institutions, to serve the public and promote Utilitarian ideals".

In his *Plan for an Universal and Perpetual Peace*, Bentham considered war as the chief cause of suffering and proposed two planks for its elimination,: that of reducing military forces in Europe and to emancipate colonies. For the welfare of all civilized nations he suggested three goals—simplicity of government, national frugality and peace. He opposed international treatises and trade barriers and pointed out that trade was always advantageous to both parties but war, ruinous to all the participants in modern times. He desired the establishment of a common court of judicature to decide differences among states but did not want, unlike St. Pierre and Rousseau, the court to be armed with coercive powers. Establishing a judicial court was in the interest of all. Bentham recommended a congress of deputies from each country whose proceedings would be made public. He distrusted secret diplomacy, had enornmous faith in the efficacy of public opinion and was more optimistic than Kant, about achieving lasting world peace and happiness if people are allowed personal contact with one another than through the abrasive relations between governments thus anticipating the contemporary thrust on people to people diplomacy as the basis of building amity and peace. The cybernetic school of integration led by Karl Deutsch after the Second World War made it the most important plank for achieving regional integration and thereby peace.Bentham's plan is quite sketchy and obviously not comprehensive. However, he demonstrates the usefulness of disarmament and warns about the dangers of colonialism and secrecy. Though he alludes to the power of public opinion in international affairs he was also conscious as to how it could be stifled. He also coins the word 'international'. "The basic Benthamite idea has persisted to this day that the ordinary citizen can have a vision of a more peaceful, just and happy world and has both the right and power to coerce his own government to policies consonant with this ideal" (Heater 1990: 55-56).

Self-Assessment

Choose the correct option:

1. English translations of Beccaria's Essays on crimes and punishment published in

   (*i*) 1764 (*ii*) 1765 (*iii*) 1785 (*iv*) 1763

2. In which year Bentham acknowledged with a sensation of Archimedes the full import of Priestly's Phrase as being a possible foundations of morals and legislations

   (*i*) 1776 (*ii*) 1770 (*iii*) 1775 (*iv*) 1771

3. An attack on the established church came in **Church of Englandism** in

   (*i*) 1817 (*ii*) 1819 (*iii*) 1818 (*iv*) 1816

4. Bentham started and financed the Westminster in ..... .

   (*i*) 1823 (*ii*) 1820 (*iii*) 1822 (*iv*) 1824

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9.8 Summary

- Bentham advanced numerous ideas which have become central to the liberal creed of the nineteenth century. These were liberty of speech and of the press, liberty of association, freedom of trade, freedom to emigrate from one country to another, support for the rule of law, faith in public opinion, and freedom from arbitrary and despotic government. His commitment to political and constitutional democracy, his support for the extension of suffrage, his belief in the need to widen the ambit of participation to cover as many people as possible and his faith in gradual reforms based on the individual's expectations of security injected new ideas into the traditional notion of liberalism.
- Bentham retained the Lockeian idea of liberty with due regard to property, but suggested gradual redistribution of wealth through taxation of inheritance, to ensure a society where the poor enjoyed minimal security and the rich did not feel threatened. In this sense, he laid down the economic basis of the welfare state.
- Bentham's concentration on security—on the instrument of good government—enabled him to move beyond the Lockean conception of the minimal state towards one more appropriate for a modem democratic society where security would be conceived more widely in terms of education, health and welfare as well as real property and wealth (Rosen 1990: 68).
- Bentham was a firm believer in gradual reform. He had no faith in the violence of a revolution. His detailed reform package played a crucial role in transforming early liberalism into something that was "socially beneficent and never in intention merely exploitative" (Sabine 1973: 612). His contributions to the development of liberalism were varied and manifold. He used ideas inherited from Locke, Hume, Montesquieu and Helvetius to mount a thorough attack on outmoded ideas and practices. After Bentham, the most vocal strand in liberal thought was based on Utilitarian principles. "Utilitarianism was essentially a British phenomenon, a philosophy based on empirical investigation, hedonism, the association of ideas and a liberal and humane approach to political and economic affairs".
- Bentham's Utilitarian principles not only dominated the liberal discourse, but also influenced the early socialist writings of William Thompson (1785-1833). In fact, Beatrice Webb (1858-1943) acknowledged Bentham as Sidney Webb's (1859-1947) intellectual godfather, though the Fabians did not accept the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Like Bentham, the Fabians realized the urgent need for institutional inspection and criticism before social reconstruction. They were empiricists. Like Bentham, they regarded education as the "keystone of reformation". The Fabians, like the Utilitarians, organized a research society patterned after the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, which gradually became the pivot of the Fabian society. They were associated with the University College, and in 1895 established the London School of Economics. In 1912 they started the *New Statesman*. Both the Utilitarians and the Fabians believed in infiltration of the parliament and conversion of existing members. But the Fabians dismissed Bentham's economic understanding as weak. However, this was not surprising, for Bentham never thought highly of his powers of economic analysis. Both rejected the theory of natural rights. While Bentham wanted to emulate Newton, the Fabians, like Marx, were inspired by Charles Robert Darwin (1802-1885), and both sought to build a counterpart of the natural sciences.
- Thanks to the efforts of many current scholars, it is at last becoming clear that Bentham may with more truth be called the patriarch of British collectivism than the father of individualism. The Fabians were direct descendants of Bentham via Chadwick and Forster. Indeed, as J. Bartlet Brebner, one of the pioneer debunkers of the utilitarian myth, pointedly asks, what were the Fabians but the latter day Benthamites? (Mack 1955: 88).

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- In the 1820s, Bentham provided a new approach to constitutional theory, which advanced the precepts and absorbed the criticisms of the great period of constitutional thought and practice around the time of the American and French Revolutions. He gave to this existing theory not only a new foundation, but also a new emphasis on administrative and judicial organization with regard to responsible exercise of power. By conceiving the ends of legislation to include security, subsistence, abundance and equality, and by envisaging political structures to advance these ends, Bentham could foresee the needs and aspirations of the modern democratic state (Miller 1987: 39-40).
- The thrust of Benthamite Utilitarianism was on relieving pain and providing security, on insisting that the pleasures of all individuals deserved equal respect and consideration, and that they should not be interfered with unless it interfered in the pleasure of others. It was true that he did not delve into the spiritual or intellectual dimensions of the individual's pursuit of pleasure, but that shortcoming, if it was one, was made up by J.S. Mill, who offered a conception of liberty that was spiritually and intellectually satisfying to the individual. Mill revised and improvised Benthamite Utilitarianism, but
- Bentham is truly the founding father. As anyone who has written on Mill knows, he cannot be understood except in terms of Bentham— and not only genetically, formatively, but at every point and turning of his life and thought. Mill may have refined, corrected, amplified, even transcended Bentham; but it is only by reference to Bentham that we can appreciate what he tried to do, what he did do, and what, perhaps he finally failed to do.

9.9 Key-Words

1. Unflinching : Not showing fear or hesitation in the face of danger or difficulty-unflinching determination
2. Contraptions : A mechanical device
3. Panopticon : The panopticon was proposed as a model prison by Jeremy Bentham, a Utilitarian Philosopher and Theorist of British legal reform.
4. Connotation : The suggesting of a meaning by a word apart from the thing it explicitly names or describes.

9.10 Review Questions

1. Critically examine the Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarian principle.
2. Describe the Bentham political philosophy.
3. Briefly describe Bentham's theory of state.
4. What is the view of Bentham on women and gender equality.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (*i*) 2. (*ii*) 3. (*iii*) 4. (*iv*)

9.11 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Unit 10 : George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to :

- Understand the importance of reason
- Comment on philosophy of history and right
- Explain Popper's critique
- Discuss dialectics.

Introduction

Epoch-making events lead to important political theorizing. One of the finest examples of the co-relationships between a major event and its tremendous impact on an entire generation in a country is exemplified by the impact of the French Revolution and German political theorizing for the coming half a century. The French Revolution had its impact throughout Europe, and Wordsworth wrote

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
>
> **But to be young was very heaven**

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and all the other important German thinkers, Kant, Fichte and Schelling were the children of the French Revolution. Compared to both England and France, Germany was much more backward and feudal, consisting of more than 300 states loosely linked to the Holy Roman Empire with leadership provided by Francis I of Austria. It came to an end when Napoleon defeated this 1000-year-old empire, and subsequently in 1806 defeated another powerful German state, Prussia. Hegel was a resident of Prussia at the time of the defeat, and in the normal course the expectation would be that the support and the sympathy of the young Hegel would be for Prussia. But, surprisingly, his admiration was for Napoleon; he welcomed the conquests and domination of Napoleon. The admiration for Napoleon was total, for he wrote in a letter, "The Emperor—this world soul—I saw riding through the city to review his troops, it is indeed a wonderful feeling to see such an individual who, here concentrated into a single point, sitting on a horse, reaches out over the world and dominates it"

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When Napoleon ruled, he earned Hegel's acclaim, and when he was defeated in 1814, for Hegel it was a tragedy, a genius vanquished by mediocrity. This admiration of Napoleon highlighted a very significant component of German political theory of this period, with its primary focus on dealing with the question of organizing the modern state and society on the basis of reason, and that meant protection of the freedom and interests of the individual. The Enlightenment philosophy was actualized by the temper and ideas of the French Revolution. Even the subsequent terror did not lead to this adulation of the spirit of the revolution, though the terror itself was severely criticized by German thinkers. The well-known sentence that "issues become political at a particular time and place" was exemplified by the quest of the German thinkers to create a modern order with the abolition of feudalism, and putting the middle class and individual at the centre stage. With confidence in science and knowledge, a political order based on reason looked both plausible and desirable. The setting of the formulation came out of an awareness of the relative backwardness of Germany, and the acceptance that an external agency was necessary to bring about the desired change in Germany and hence the adulation for Napoleon in Hegel, one of the three heroes, the other two being, Socrates and Julius Caesar. Hegel regarded Napoleon as the person who carried forward the real progressive element of the French Revolution, by liquidating the extremities and excesses of the revolution, exemplified by Robiespierre's terror and by providing the necessary order and rule of law which allowed industrial production to grow at great speed. Hegel grasped what later Socialists and Marxists put at the central stage of analysis, the capacity of the modern industrialized civilization to meet the needs and aspirations of every single individual. Saint Simon, whom Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) described as the second-most encyclopaedic mind alter Hegel, was also popularizing the possibility of the establishment of a free and rational society, based on reason as a positive outcome of this revolutionary and industrial process. Hegel's emphasis on human reason had to be understood in the context of this new temper and optimism, created by the possibilities of the creation of a new and prosperous societal order. All his important concepts—freedom, subject, mind and notion—were based on this unshakeable faith in human rationality. His eulogy of the French Revolution also emanated from the conviction that both reason and right were established by the philosophical basis of the revolution.

One significant change that could be found in this kind of understanding from the pre-revolutionary belief-structure was that there was no automatic or uncritical acceptance of the contemporary reality, as it was recognized that a minimum standard was expected from a given political and societal structure, and what logically followed was that if that structure did not have the capacity to absorb the positive aspects of this new epoch, then that structure had to be replaced with a more modern one which was conducive to the needs and aspirations of the contemporary situation. The first important thing that was regarded as being an obstacle to this modern Germany was the continuation of feudalism, seen as a structure that did not allow healthy and free competition which was the basis of progress and affluence. It was also an obstacle to the establishment of a modern political order that was based on equality before law.

10.1 Life Sketch

Hegel was born in Stuttgart, Germany on August 27, 1770. His father was a civil servant, and most of his relatives were either teachers or Lutheran ministers. He was 19 when the French Revolution broke out. By the time he was 21, the revolutionary wars had begun. This was also the golden age of German literature.

Hegel was a brilliant student, and at school he excelled and won a scholarship to a reputed seminary at Tubingen in 1788, where he studied philosophy and theology. After completing his studies, he accepted the position of a family tutor with a wealthy family in Switzerland from 1793 to 1796. This was followed by a similar position at Berne and Frankfurt from 1797 to 1800. His philosophical speculations began at this time.

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Hegel's father died in 1799. His inheritance was modest. He gave up tutoring and took to writing. He published a book differentiating the philosophies of Fichte and Schelling. In collaboration with Schelling, he edited the *Journal fur Philosophie*. His long work, *Science of Logic* in three volumes, appeared in 1812, 1813 and 1816. By this time he became quite well-known, and in 1816 he was invited to take up the post of professor of philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. Here he wrote the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

Did u know? Hegel's well-known *Phenomenology of Mind* appeared in 1807. He was a university lecturer at Jena from 1801 to 1807. After working for a year as a newspaper editor in Bamberg, he moved to Nuremberg as headmaster of a high school in 1808, and continued in this position till 1816.

By this time, Hegel became quite famous, and the Prussian minister of education offered him the prestigious chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin, succeeding Fichte. Berlin was the intellectual centre of Germany, and Hegel accepted the offer and taught at Berlin from 1818 till his death in 1831. This period was the most eventful in his life. He wrote his famous work *Philosophy of Right*, and lectured on the philosophy of history, religion, aesthetics and the history of philosophy. In all these diverse areas, he covered many aspects of political theory.

Hegel was the founder of modern idealism and the greatest influence in the first half of the eighteenth century, when the entire academic community in Germany was divided between Hegelians, the Left Hegelians and the Right Hegelians. He formulated the theories of dialectic and of self-realization. He gave a new theory of history, which, according to him, was the human spirit writ large, the "march of reason in the world". He was critical of purely reflective knowledge, as "the owl of Minerva spreads its wing only at the gathering of the dusk". Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* published in 1821 dealt with key issues of law, politics and morality, and made an important distinction between the state and civil society.

Towards the end of his life, Hegel started attracting large audiences from the entire German-speaking world. It was his disciples who published several of his lecture notes after Hegel's death. Some of Hegel's other well-known works include *Lectures in the Philosophy of History, Lecture on Aesthetics, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion and Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. In 1830, in recognition of his works, Hegel was elected rector of the university. The following year, he suddenly died on November 14, at the age of 61.

10.2 Importance of Reason

Hegel was critical of Kant's handling of reason while dealing with the challenge of empiricism. If things in themselves were beyond the scrutiny of reason, then reason remained merely subjective, without control over objective reality, leading to an unacceptable division of the world between subjectivity and objectivity. The relation between subject and object was a complex but interrelated one, with unity of the opposite subjects or matters both in theory and practice leading to *praxis*. This conflict was of crucial importance to Hegel, as his seminal contribution of alienation originated with this formulation. The alienation of mind originated when the objective factors which were originally produced by human labour and knowledge became detached and unrecognizable to man. In such a situation, theory did not reflect reality, and truth had no meaning in the real world. As a result, human frustration and helplessness increased. To end this separateness in all its manifestations, the entire framework of enquiry was brought within the ambit of reason. Separateness had to be ended by a theory of unity of totality in philosophy.

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This utmost emphasis on reason was of tremendous importance to Hegel, as human emancipation—a distinct possibility in the modern period—could only be realized on the basis of reason. "Man could be free, could develop all his potentialities, only if his entire world was dominated by an integrating rational will and by knowledge. The Hegelian system anticipates a state in which this possibility has been achieved". This was how, in Hegel's theory, reality merged with rationality.

Hegel, however, was well aware that the present reality in many of its manifestations was far from reason and perfection. But what he emphasized was the human capacity to cherish freedom, and in that sense had the capacity to transcend the imperfections of contemporary nature and society by the process of mediation. Reason and human action led to mediation, by new concepts and categories replacing old ones, which at one time looked stable. This was the driving force of the Hegelian dialectic, which made his philosophy a negative one. Marcuse remarked :

> It is originally motivated by the conviction that the given facts that appear to commonsense as the positive index of truth, so that truth can be established by their destruction. The driving force of the dialectical method lies in this critical conviction. Dialectic in its entirety is linked to the conception that all forms of being are permeated by an essential negativity, and that this negativity determines their content and movement. The dialectic represents the counter thrust to any form of positivism.

10.3 Philosophy of History

To convince that the present was really different from the past, capable of actualizing reason and ending the negative and critical roles of philosophy, Hegel had to dissect the historical process of humankind critically and comprehensively. In attempting to perform this gigantic task, there was also a marked difference between Kant and Hegel. Kant argued with the help of philosophical reasoning that human nature was permanent and unchanging. Hegel pointed out that human nature, like everything else, changed from one historical epoch to another. Employing his dialectical method, Hegel developed one of his most enduring achievements, a philosophy of history based on change. "It was Hegel who established the history of philosophy as a central academic discipline as part of the core of any philosophic education" (Kaufmann 1965 : 21-22). Commenting on the enormous influence of Hegel, Engels wrote :

What distinguished Hegel's mode of thinking from that of all other philosophers was the exceptional historical sense underlying it. However abstract and idealist the form employed, the development of his Ideas runs always parallel to the development of world history, and the latter is indeed supposed to be only the proof of the former.

Engels' clear statement revealed that for him and Marx, no other philosopher could match Hegel's sense of history, as it truly reflected the process of world history. Such a claim emerged because the Hegelian scheme of analyzing history had both a reflection of accumulation of a good deal of facts encompassing a large portion of world history, and a novelty of the method of the dialectic in understanding the hidden meaning of the process of history. His canvas included the ancient and important civilizations of India, China, and Persia, linking them to the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, ultimately stressing the development of the modern period of European history reflecting on European feudalism, the Protestant Reformation and ending with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. But what distinguished Hegel's enterprise from other historical accounts was the important fact that the philosophy of history was not purely a historical account, but a way to comprehend the entire evolution of human civilization in a comparative perspective, with a view to understanding the meaning and rationality behind the evolution.

This rationality of world history was the progress of the consciousness of freedom. Since the concept of freedom was the pivot around which the entire political philosophy of Hegel hinged, it was important to find the link between the realization of freedom and the process of history, not only of Europe but also of the Orient.

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The beginning for Hegel was the oriental world, consisting of China, India and Persia. China and India were static, i.e. stationary civilizations, in which no change worth the name had taken place for thousands of years. They were non-dialectical, and, for Hegel, outside the framework of world history. The most important reason for the unchanging nature of these civilizations was that they did not comprehend the idea of freedom, since a single person (the ruler) was supreme, subordinating all others under the rule of oriental despotism. This despotism was not just based on the fear of persecution and cruelty, as that would mean that the subjects had a consciousness of their own. However, this was not the case. The subjects lacked consciousness.

Both law and morality emanated from an external authority. Since individual consciousness was lacking, individuals did not have the capacity for moral judgements of right and wrong. Nothing was questioned, and subservience to the despot was total. However, Hegel conceded that this lack of individual consciousness manifested itself differently in other cultures and civilizations. The Chinese state was governed on the model of a family, and the emperor was looked to for providing the basis of their paternal order, the subjects being like children. In India, despotism was naturally ordained by the caste system, and that explained its static and unchanging nature. Both China and India were outside the process of history, as both reflected arrested development.

Among the oriental states, Persia was distinctly different. The modern process of history that Hegel spoke of begins here. The Persian emperor was similar to the Chinese one, for both enjoyed absolute power. But they differed in actual position. In Persia, the loyalty to the state was not akin to that within a family. The relationship between the ruler and subject was based on general category. Persia was a theocratic monarchy based on Zoroastrianism, which believed in worshipping the light. For Hegel, light, like the sun, was a universal category as its benefit was shared equally by all. Still, the ruler was an absolute ruler and his rule was based on a general criterion which was not a natural one. This was not possible in China and India. As a universal principle or rule was the basic necessity for acquiring the consciousness of freedom, true history began with ancient Persia.

Within Persia, though the consciousness of freedom existed in its rudimentary form, its realization within the Persian Empire remained unfulfilled. Because of proximity and desire for expansion and domination, it developed contacts with Athens, Sparta and other city states of ancient Greece. The Persian emperor wanted the Greeks to accept his authority, which the Greek city states refused. Consequent to the refusal, the Persian emperor sent a huge army and a fleet of ships to subdue the Greeks. The Persian and the Greek fleets fought an epic battle in 480 BC at Salamis, a Greek island in the Aegean Sea, west of Athens. The Greeks won on account of their smaller ships. Hegel perceived it to be a contest between an oriental despot who wanted to conquer the Greeks and establish his own authority, and the separate Greek states committed to "free individuality". The Greek victory shifted the focus of world history from oriental despotism to the Greek city states.

However, like Marx's notion of primitive communism, the Greek notion of freedom was only partial and not total. This limitation arose out of two reasons. First, the Greeks used slaves, which meant that they had only a partial realization of freedom, as a universal philosophy could not exclude any section. But Hegel also acknowledged that the limited democracy of the Greeks needed slavery for its success. It was a necessary evil, as political participation meant that somebody else would have to provide for the necessities of life. The base of *working non-citizens* made possible the public activities of *non-working citizens*. This functionalist attitude was very similar to the defence of slavery by Aristotle, who could postulate the end of it only when some other mechanism of work could be established. This incompleteness was also reflected in another way, as the Greeks did not have any conception of individual consciousness. But the difference with the oriental world was that whereas in the Orient obedience came from external agencies, for the Greeks it was derived from within. It was habitual obedience, without a universal or impersonal

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principle. They identified totally with the city state, without distinguishing their own interests from those of the community. It was inconceivable for them to think of an existence without or in opposition to it. The motivation was natural, as it was in Henry Maine's criticism of Austin's theory of sovereignty. The basic precondition for freedom for Hegel was the existence of two qualities (the capacity for critical insight, and reflection), and since the Greeks lacked it, their realization of freedom was only partial.

In understanding this true basis of freedom, Socrates played a pioneering role. He symbolized the spirit of the Greek god Apollo, "Man, know thyself. Socratic dialogues were a reflection of this spirit of free enquiry, in which Socrates gave his own views in contrast to those of others, on subjects like "good", "just" or "education". In each one of them, the customary belief or common-sense tenets were questioned by critical reasoning. "This critical reflection makes reason, not social custom the final judge of right and wrong".

Socrates' revolutionary appeal against the ideological basis of the Athenian state was highlighted by Hegel. From the perspective of the Athenian state, the death sentence against Socrates was an essential and correct act, as his critical reasoning eroded the basic foundation of the existence of the state and commonality based on customary morality. The death of Socrates, argued Hegel, did not, however, put an end to the dialectics which had taken firm intellectual roots. As a result, the executioners were seen as villains and Socrates emerged as a hero, though a tragic one. Hegel also added that the independent line of thinking that Socrates encouraged led to the subsequent downfall of Athens and the collapse of the city states.

The achievement of the Greeks was their essential homogeneity, and this stood in sharp contrast to the Roman Empire, which was heterogeneous and diverse. There was neither a natural patriarchy as in the Orient, nor a customary bond of the Greeks which enforced strict discipline, backed by force, among them. The Roman Empire resembled the oriental world more than the Greek one, but that was only in appearance. Hegel had tremendous respect for Aristotle, whom he looked upon as a kindred spirit. Contrasting Plato with Aristotle, he pointed out that while Plato laid down the general in abstract form as a principle, in Aristotle thought became concrete.

Hegel's philosophy of history was based on the assumption that the process had to be interpreted dialectically, which made going back to an earlier situation impossible. There was also a progressive side of history, though it was never smooth and even. As such, there were bound to be differences between the earlier experience of the Persians and the later development of the Romans. The Socratic notion of critical judgement was not relegated to history, and the Roman constitution and legal system sanctioned individual rights as one of the basic precepts. This was the basic difference between the Persian and the Roman Empires. But even in the Roman Empire, such guarantees formed the "abstract freedom of the individual as the real freedom based on diversity of ideas reflecting concrete individuality" was never allowed by the brutal power of Rome. This led to constant tension between an absolutist state power and the spirit of individual freedom, which made the Roman civilization an unhappy one. The true spirit of the Greeks was replaced by enforced conformity, which meant a retreat from the public to the private domain, leading to the non-political philosophies of Stoicism, Epicureanism and Skepticism. These diverse philosophies were based on the negation of the real world by avoiding affluence, political power and glory, substituting them with utter indifference to such values. These philosophies of withdrawal arose out of helplessness in influencing the political process. This negative response by itself was not enough, and a more positive solution emerged from the rise of Christianity. The difference between animals and humans was that the former lived only in a natural world, whereas human beings had a spiritual side to their existence. When the natural world of material surroundings became an impediment to their urge for freedom, a positive response emerged, as it happened with the rise of Christianity during Roman rule.

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The uniqueness of Christianity lay in the fact that Jesus combined in him a human body with being the Son of God. This linked human beings to some infinite values, an eternal destiny, "religious consciousness" which made the city of God the spiritual world, the individual's true home (and not the natural world of the present) the city of humans. A link is established between the life in the material world and that in the spiritual one. However, placing the entire argument within his progressive knowledge of history, he asserted that the movement towards this cosmic unity began with the Romans and reached culmination only in the contemporary world. The rise of Christianity allowed the re-creation of the spirit of freedom of the Greeks in the contemporary world. But unlike the Greeks, the Christian doctrine opposed slavery and replaced the customary morality of the Greeks by a universal spiritual idea of love and fellow feeling.

By the time of Constantine, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, and continued for 1000 years of the Byzantine Empire, though the western part was detached from it by the barbarian invasions. But this Christianity for Hegel was both decadent and stagnant, and led to the rise of the contemporary world—what Hegel called the Germanic world.

Hegel referred to the entire period of history from the fall of the Roman Empire to his times as the Germanic period. He used it broadly to include the Scandinavian countries, Holland and also Great Britain. He also took note of the developments in Italy and France. But all these paled into insignificance in what Hegel perceived to be the most important happening after the fall of the Roman Empire : the Reformation, which began in Germany. The German nations "were the first to attain the consciousness that man, as man, is free, that it is the freedom of spirit which constitutes its essence". The thousand years that elapsed between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Restoration was a tragic period of history. There was a total degeneration of the Church and the true religious spirit, for there was more insistence on blind obedience, and that was a sad development of a faith which started with great promise. The Middle Ages, noted Hegel, were "a long, eventful and terrible night"; that night ended with the dawn of the Renaissance, "that blush of dawn which after long storms first brokers the return of a bright and glorious day". Hegel saw the Reformation as being more important than the Renaissance, and described it as "the all enlightening Sun". With the Renaissance and Reformation began the happy period of the modern age.

The Reformation ended the corruption of the Church, symbolized by Luther's protest. But it was not just the achievement of one single individual, rather the lasting achievement of the entire Germanic people. The two key words that Hegel used for the Reformation were "simplicity" and "heart". The Reformation swept away the hold of the Catholic Church with the simple but revolutionary and explosive formulation that the individual had a direct spiritual relationship with God (Christ), and as such did not need the mediation of anybody else. The replacement of Roman Catholicism with Protestantism was not merely a revolt against the oppression of the old Church, more important, it established the idea of individual identity and salvation. This set aside the interpretation of scriptures, and there was no compulsion to perform rituals. The judgement of truth, justness and goodness would be moulded by one's self. This was the assertion of the free spirit, which Hegel asserted was the destiny of humankind. The acceptance of individual freedom based on human rationality and free choice was the crowning glory of modern times.

Hegel saw the aforesaid aspect bringing about significant changes, such as rationalization of standards to accommodate multitudes of rational people. As such, any claim to universality had to first satisfy the claim of rationality in all the spheres of social institutions, legal structures, property, social morality, governmental organizations and the constitution. Since individuals had the right of free choice, support would emerge only when institutions were based on rational foundations. In such a situation, arbitrary rules and abuse of power could not exist, thereby creating a world of harmony between the individual and the real world that he encountered.

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Hegel, like other thinkers of the Enlightenment in general and Diderot and Voltaire in particular, looked upon reason as a guide to human existence. The French Revolution was the culmination of these developments, representing the philosophers' critique of the existing order. The French nobility lost its rational basis, and that explained the emergence and popularity of the doctrine of the Rights of Man. Hegel hailed the Revolution as a "glorious mental dawn" which had to be welcomed by all thinking people. However, the euphoria was short-lived, for it led to revolutionary terror, with the guillotine institutionalizing punishment without any legal basis. This deterioration took place because the revolution wanted to implement purely abstract philosophical notions, without ascertaining what the people really wanted. It was not directed by reason, as it never took note of the totality of the situation, and relied more on isolated acts, which never succeeded. As a result, the revolution remained a promise unfulfilled.

The significance of the French Revolution was to be understood in the context of its influence elsewhere in Europe, and in particular, in Germany. The brief periods of Napoleonic victories and rule brought in the desired changes in Germany, like giving it a series of rights, establishment of freedom of the individual, freedom of property, opening of state jobs to the most talented, and the end of feudal obligations. Hegel took note of the fact that monarchy still remained at the apex, and its decisions were important, but because of well-established laws and efficient rule-based state organizations, personal discretion hardly mattered.

The movement of world history, for Hegel, had reached its destination and this was made possible by two factors. The first was the capacity and the circumstances in which the individual acted according to his own conscience and convictions. This was the individual spirit which sought happiness and provided energy. The second factor was the corresponding social and political institutions of the real world, which was based on reason. This was the world spirit which tried to reach a higher freedom which came with the knowledge of the self, providing the necessary direction. Both were necessary, as one was incomplete without the other, and the absence of one signified conflict and not harmony. Hegel was explicit in his emphasis that in history, nothing was achieved without individuals, each pursuing his own goals, whatever those goals might be. But for knowing whether the actions were in conformity with the dialectic of the universal, "the cunning of reason" played its role, and "sets passions to work for itself".

The individuals broadly fell under three categories with regard to their roles in history : (a) the category of persons in whom the customs and beliefs of a particular civilization were realized, signifying the rights and duties of that particular order, resisting the process of historical change and becoming chief victims of history; (b) the category including the world-historical individuals (like Julius Caesar), who, though seeking their particular ends, possessed the insight to grasp the truth of their age; and (c) the category consisting of moral reformers who continuously evaluated things from "is" to "ought", Hegel being very critical of such persons, as in the name of reason, liberty and justice, they took up a "position not merely of discontent, but also of open revolt against the actual condition of the world".

In Hegel, both the subjective idea of freedom of the individual, as also the notion of freedom towards which the spirit was destined to move, were abstractions. These abstractions became concrete in the social life of man, which for Hegel was the state, the bearer of freedom. Rejecting the idea of natural rights, he also criticized the very basic premise of the Enlightenment theory, the cherished ideal of individual rights, making the state the means to the end for the realization of these rights. The state was the "embodiment of rational freedom, realizing and recognizing itself in an objective form".

Hegel, however, did not work out the details of the nature of the rational state in the *Philosophy of History*. This had been provided in the *Philosophy of Rights*, where he spelt out the details of a rationally organized state based on the enjoyment of individual freedom. Hegel's fundamental conviction was that Western civilization was built by two important forces : (*a*) the harmonious

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Greek Institutions, and (*b*) Christianity. He was convinced that human history had culminated in Germany, and there was no more forward march to be made, which explained his reluctance to speculate about the future.

Hegel, like Kant, was concerned with historical analysis, but differed from him in his ideas and methods of analysis. Like Kant, he viewed history as the progressive manifestation of man's reason, but unlike Kant, he was disinterested as far as the future was concerned. His purpose was to show that human history had been progressive till the present, and beyond that he had very little to say. In a sense, Hegel believed that the philosophy of history was some kind of theodicy. He agreed that from very early times, humans had speculated about God's providence and the power of reason. However, all those who had done so always thought that the logic of such providence was beyond the comprehension of ordinary human beings. On the contrary, Hegel thought that he was capable enough of demonstrating the basis for eternal reason and giving an adequate reply to the question of manifestation of universal reason first in nature and then in history, which was a record of human progress from one state to another, towards the individual's essential goals. He differed from Kant insofar as taking into account the basis of the human condition that varied from one historical era to another was concerned. Kant, on the other hand, treated freedom purely on philosophical grounds.

The idea of progress was of crucial importance to Hegel, as by this he stressed the development from the rudiments to the final form of perfection. This progressive unfolding of human history was explained by the idea of the dialectic—in essence the idea of the dialectic goes back to Socrates, Hegel's great hero—by which all the different concepts were bound together. These concepts were not static, but dynamic, in the sense that when one fulfilled its role, it generated from within another, which was in opposition to the first concept. The conflict between the two concepts produced the third, which within its fold united the first two. This dialectical progression had to be found in virtually everything : logic, nature and spirit.

One could notice striking differences in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and *Phenomenology* regarding the progress of the Mind and the object of its attainment. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel did not mention specific countries, periods, dates, events or people. The emphasis was on the general process of development of the mind, compelled by its inner necessity of realizing itself. The analysis was on an abstract level. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel described the progress of the mind as developing towards absolute knowledge, while in the other two works he described the course of history as progress towards the attainment of freedom. The inference one could make was that, for Hegel, absolute knowledge and true freedom were intrinsically linked. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel saw all human history as the necessary path of the development of the mind. Freedom, for Hegel, was not the ability to do what one pleased, but lay in developing an autonomous, free mind. It meant rational choice. Reason was regarded as something universal, and hence the mind was also inherently universal. For the human being to be free, he must fully comprehend the rational and universal nature of his intellect; hence the link between freedom and knowledge in Hegel's paradigm.

However, in spite of the unique influence and the impressive structure of history that Hegel built, it was one of the most severely criticized concepts. Plamentaz (1963 : Vol. II) inquired as to why the spirit should be ultimately tied to the nation states when a synthesis in the universal process looked more logical, when the process of history itself was universal. Hegel had no satisfactory answer to this fundamental question, and his theory of the culmination of human history in the nation states was not a very cogently argued case. MacIntyre pointed out that the Greek life was far from being harmonious, and in fact was ridden with violent conflicts, which Hegel ignored.

Thus, for Hegel, history had a certain meaning, purpose and significance. It was not just a record of the past. On the contrary, it was a progressive evolution and the world-historical individuals were decisive influences on this evolution. However, history was not made by states or for states,

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or by world-historical individuals. It was made by people for people, by ideas of intellectuals like Hegel. Marx made Hegel's philosophy of history the starting point of his analysis, and thereby transformed the very nature of the subject.

> Hegel himself was unsurpassed among modern philosophers in his knowledge of the history of Western culture. The history of religions, the history of philosophy and the history of law were created as special subjects of investigation largely under the influence exerted by his philosophy .

10.4 Philosophy of Right

Once Hegel became confident that the present reality was the ultimate one, he concentrated on guiding enlightened citizens for the purposeful conduct of public life. Like Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics*, the material that we find collected in the *Philosophy of Right* comprised the lecture notes that he delivered at the University of Berlin. Significantly, unlike his other works which were compiled from the notes of his students; the *Philosophy of Right* was painstakingly prepared for publication by Hegel himself. It was supposed to be a "compendium", the purpose of which was "the need for putting into the hands of my audience a text book for the lectures on the *Philosophy of Right* which I deliver in the course of my professional duties" : Preface, 1). Many scholars raised the question regarding the impact of the prevailing strict political control of the university publication on the text itself, thereby implying that there were important differences between his lecture notes and the published version, the latter obviously being a more careful and perhaps a doctored exercise. We are not quite certain about this. But it was clear that the purpose of the publication by Hegel was to "create a public minded ruling class, a sort of ideal civil service, fully committed to the values of civility, impartiality and honourable conduct". It was a long-term educational project beginning at the universities and then spreading to other spheres. As such, it was a guide to action to conduct the complex affairs of the state. With this overriding concern for harmony, the text was supposed to create the basic framework of the detailed functioning of the modern state, for which Hegel had to discuss the roles and functions of various components like the, family, civil society, the legal apparatus, representative assemblies, bureaucracy, the monarchy and questions involving international relations and war.

Family, Women and Children

Hegel had a much idealized view of the family. He characterized it as an arena of love based on a sense of fulfillment and unity. Within the family, individuality flowered, not independently but as a part of the larger whole. Hegel dealt with all the important aspects of family formation like marriage, family, property and capital, the education of children and the dissolution of the family. Marriage, for Hegel, was essentially an ethical relationship. It was a special kind of unity, whose "objective source lies in the free consent of the persons, especially in their consent of the persons, especially in their consent to make themselves one person, to renounce their natural and individual personality to this unity of one with the other". The bond of marriage was based on love, trust and commonality. Recognition and confirmation by the family and the community were equally important.

Hegel reflected the prejudices of his time, for he reinforced the traditional sexual division of labour within the family and the stereotyped image of the woman. In external matters, man was supposed to be powerful and active, while the woman was to be both passive and subjective. The arena of civil society was an exclusively male preserve, whereas for the female her substantive destiny was with the family. Hegel gave the example of Sophocles' *Antigone* in defence of his thesis.

Hegel regarded women as inferior, with less reasoning abilities, reinforcing the argument that the natural differences between the sexes were immutable and basic. This did not deter him from

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giving women a significant role. He discussed women while analyzing the role of the family, which he described as a "natural ethical community" and an "ethical mind in its natural or immediate phase". The family was natural because its bonds were based on feelings that were intuitive and immediate. It had an ethical quality because the love that it imparted had a universal and spiritual quality. It was not based on brute force or unmediated egoism. It contained reason in its embryonic form.

Like Aristotle, Hegel regarded marriage as necessary for procreation of the human race, which was natural, outside history. He moved beyond this initial formulation and regarded marriage as "a union of mind", dismissing the arguments that it was purely sexual, contractual and emotional. Marriage symbolized reason and unity, attributes which were essential for the state.

Within the family, men had the capacity for conceptual thinking, granting them universality and real freedom, enabling them to make history and engage in politics and learning. Men were powerful and active, while women were passive and subjective, because they were self-conscious and lacked the capacity for reflection. They could be educated, but lacked the ability for science, philosophy or art—subjects that guaranteed access to the Ideal. They continued to therefore remain creatures of experience, unable to transcend it altogether. Since women lacked the universal faculty, they were prohibited from participating in the public domain. Men could attain individuality, reason and universality, while women were denied personal autonomy, since individuality and family life were incompatible.

For Hegel, like Rousseau, women were enemies of the community, for they identified their interests with those of their family. Unlike Rousseau, Hegel did not prescribe separate educational curricula for boys and girls, but even if they were equally educated, they would grow up representing unequal interests. Sons became heads of new families. Through marriage, the parties surrendered their individual personalities and formed a union, which was why the family was a basic element in human life having an ethical form and a legal persona. The man became the representative of the family in law. Natural and biological differences generated social differences. Hegel did not recognize domestic work as worthwhile. Women enjoyed an ethical status only because of the marital bond that they had with their husbands. Men could enjoy the same because of their public transactions in civil society and the state. He regarded marriage as a girl's destiny while a promiscuous man could regain his honour *qua* citizenship. Hegel contended that if women held public positions or participated in government, it would be disastrous, for they lacked universality and were bound by arbitrary inclinations and opinions. They would bring into the public domain a morality and a sense of justice that was appropriate within the private sphere. They could not be impartial, since they were not detached and lacked the capacity for abstraction.

Hegel placed a lot of importance on marriage and argued that the ethical life of the community depended on it. He discouraged marriages among the well-known, and favoured that "the parties should be drawn from separate families and their personalities should be different in origin" (Hegel 1969 : 168). He was against marriage between blood relations. The husband was the head of the family. Family property was described under no single individual's exclusive preserve, while each had a right to the common fund or property. Hegel emphasized the importance of self-subsistence and independence of the family unit.

Hegel, like Locke, argued that children had a right to maintenance and education, and that parents were responsible for their discipline and education. The punishment of children was essentially moral, "to deter them from exercising a freedom still in the toils of nature and to life the universal into their consciousness and will" . Children were potentially free and could not be treated as property by parents. In the formative years the emphasis was love, trust and obedience. The purpose of education was to make children self-reliant, so that they could enjoy the freedom of personality. This would enable them to gain power in order to leave the natural unity of the family. At this stage, the children became adults and were capable of having property and families

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of their own. The individual, at the end of the family relationship, had total freedom to dispose of his property in a manner he deemed fit.

Hegel ended the discussion of the family when families grew to form parts of the larger civil society. The disintegration of the family was a natural occurrence, and with it the larger formations emerged. Here also, dialectics was in operation, as the unity of the family provided the ethical basis of life, which, while disintegrating, captured the universal principles of life. The expansion of the family was the key to the understanding of the larger formations like a nation or a federation of different groups on a voluntary basis with a power centre. But the bases of this larger formation remained the same : needs and reciprocity.

Civil Society

In the ethical connotation of Hegel, the important formation between the family and the state was the arena of civil society, which he stated categorically was of modern origin. This was because of the fact that the modern understanding of what constituted social was very different from the ancient perception; for instance in Aristotle, civil society was identical with the political community. Cicero described "civic" as an attribute of civility, or knowledge of civic affairs and prudence. In Hegel, the nature and basis of civil society were very different from those of the family and the state. The bases of the family were love and affection. On the other hand, the state was governed competently and impartially by a universal class—the civil service. Civil society, for Hegel, reflected a "system of needs" where the individual pursued his own interests according to his inclinations and abilities. This was an achievement of the modern world, reflecting division of labour and the actualization of a new science— political economy. This new science was of enormous importance, as it had discovered the laws which governed an individual's behaviour in civil society—the major arena for the bulk of the people for the major part of their time. Hegel regarded the theories of Smith and Ricardo as important as those of Kepler and Galileo.

Civil society, in Hegel, contained three different but interrelated things : (a) the system of needs, (b) the administration of justice, and (c) need of police and cooperation. Regarding the first, Hegel said that these were particular needs of particular individuals, which existed in contrast to universal principles. They were subjective needs. Hegel argued that the needs of animals were limited in scope, whereas those of human beings multiplied. Division of labour was one of the major means of their attainment, as by this the individual's work became simpler and his skill increased with growth in output. They became interdependent, leading to a "dialectical advance" as self-interest generated a situation where everyone else's needs were also satisfied. The cumulative effects of the particular motivations led to a universal minimum in which each person's enjoyment led to similar enjoyment by all others out of this complexity of interdependence. By education and the skills of multitudes of people, the general wealth of civil society also increased.

Civil society inevitably got divided into various classes and estates. This division was bound to take place because of the different levels of skills, outlooks, interests, ways of life, opportunities and other factors like risk or fortune. The three broad groupings of the peasantry, the business class and the universal class of bureaucracy mediated between the family and the state. The state being very large and impersonal, the individual's public spirit and feeling for the community had to grow within the ambit of civil society. Hegel's corporation was the mechanism to achieve this by the flowering of professional associations and voluntary organizations. Here, Hegel sounded like Tocqueville, and accepted that freedom of association was one of the key rights of the modern world. Corporatism was to perform a number of crucial functions. It was an essential requirement for actualizing freedom. He could even go to the extent of arguing that freedom of association was more important than freedom of speech and opinion. Freedom of association was important for furthering different human capacities and for identification of a particular individual for a particular kind of grouping of one's liking or interest. Associations helped not only in preventing over centralization of the state but also in preventing fragmentation of the market at a particular level.

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They also provided for the development and recognition of particular skills, abilities, and talents. People also learnt how to cooperate, and gain by such cooperation. Membership entailed acceptance of a code of conduct which inculcated a sense of discipline. It allowed for the growth of pride and integrity, giving the individual dignity, second only to the family.

Another important aspect of corporatism was its welfare functions for the underprivileged. The state, in Hegel's theory, was not a welfare state nor was Hegel an advocate of a planned economy. But he was opposed to social indifference to poverty and the idea that people should fend for themselves. With concern for social stability, he suggested that a safety net be provided by the corporation for all those who suffered in the market. However, he recommended foreign markets and thought that domestic problems could be solved by external involvement. For him, society consisted of three classes : the agricultural, governmental and business class. The last one incorporated all craftsmen and producers.

The corporation also played the role of a mediator between the state and civil society by facilitating political representation for its members. Like other political thinkers of his time, Hegel opposed universal franchise, arguing that it would lead to fragmentation and apathy. But he was also conscious of the need for representation, and preferred corporate representation in the legislative assemblies or states. The representation was not geographical but interest-based. Participation in the political process would protect interests better. Hegel's idea was very similar to Burke's theory of representing interests. For Hegel, it was a kind of functional representation leading to class cooperation and harmony. This political recognition was essential to prevent people from forming an organized group of disgruntled people against the state.

> The consideration behind the abolition of Corporations in recent times is that the individual should fend for himself. But we may grant this and still hold that corporation membership does not alter a man's obligation to earn his living. Under modern political conditions, the citizens have only a restricted share in the public business of the state, yet it is essential to provide men—ethical entities—with work of a public character over and above their private business. This work of a public character, which the modern state does not always provide, is found in the Corporation (Hegel ibid : 278).

In the twentieth century, corporatism was looked upon with suspicion because of Italian Fascism, and also because military and authoritarian rulers of South America had used this term in the context of total governmental control and direction of business enterprises and labour movements to secure unity, discipline, order, efficiency and to crush any opposition. It was supposed to create a state-supported consensus between different and even conflicting social groups, by controlling market competition. Hegel's corporatism was very different from this. It was more akin to the idea of liberal corporatism, meaning self-regulation by quasi-autonomous social groups within the ambit of constitutional government. It was still not democratic, as by preferring organized groups and elite, it would negate the representational process.

State

For Hegel, the state represented universal altruism. It synthesized dialectically the elements within the family and civil society. As in the case of the family, the state functioned in a manner that the interests of everyone were furthered and enhanced. It represented the universal tendencies within civil society, thus giving rise to the notion of citizenship. The state had "its reality in the particular self-consciousness raised to the place of the universal". The state was "absolutely rational" and had "substantive will" for realizing itself through history, and was therefore eternal. "This substantive unity is its own motive and absolute end. In this end freedom attains its highest right. This end has the highest right over the individual, whose highest duty in turn is to be a member of the state".

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Hegel perceived the state as an end in itself; it was Mind realizing itself through history. As an idealist, Hegel viewed the state as an organism having "the highest right over the individual, whose highest duty in turn is to be a member of the state". Hegel emphasized the public nature of the state, yet he did not distinguish between the private and the public spheres. Hegel examined the different components of the state like the rule of law, the bureaucracy, and the monarchy.

Rule of Law

The rule of law was one of the key formulations in the *Philosophy of Right*. Hegel did not see law as a hindrance to freedom : it was a characteristic of freedom. He had both a broad and a narrow conception of law. In the wider sense, it was one of the instruments for realizing social cohesion. Here law was seen not as a code, but one that reflected ethical values which governed cultural life. In this holistic concept, justice was linked to the institutional ordering of entire society.

In the narrower sense, law was linked to positive legal justice. In an important clarification, he stated in the context of positive law, "it is the legal which is the source of our knowledge of what is right or more exactly of our legal rights". The emphasis on the conventional principles of law made him reject a conception of higher or natural law. The basis of this argument stemmed from the fact that modem civil codes were becoming more rational and public. The dignity of the rule of law had to be honoured.

Laws were for universal application, and had to be based on impersonal and universal values. Under such a system, every person was a legal entity who was entitled to dispose of the objects which were his property. The quantity of that property was a question of legal indifference.

What mattered was the legal authority to acquire, use and exchange property with others, based on the principle : "Be a person and respect others as persons".

An interesting aspect of the Hegelian legal system was that it lacked the idea of command normally associated with Hobbes. The determining characteristic of a legal norm was its form, which had its basis in practical rationality. The embodiment of a rule was more important than command. It was this rule that gave meaning and shape to the rule of law, and distinguished it from arbitrary power. In an important distinction between command and law, Hegel asserted that commands and orders were specified purposes for identified people, whereas the ambit of law was much wider, as it addressed a larger and unknown audience, and was equally applicable to all within its jurisdiction. Command was from a superior to an inferior. The basis of rational authority had to have the sanction of law.

Hegel also rejected the notion that the purpose of law was the realization of a lofty ideal of human excellence, or the full development of human capacities. The ancient view on this was rejected by Hegel. For instance, in Aristotle, the purpose of law was to instil in citizens a very high level of civic virtue. But in Hegel, all such issues were left to the private discretion of the individual. One major difference between the ancient and modern formulations was that in the former, the emphasis of law was on determining details of conduct and behaviour, whereas the modern perception was on the generality of the law, as it provided personal initiative and freedom. Hegel was critical of "the legislation of the ancients", as it is "full of precepts about uprightness and integrity which are unsuited by nature to legal enactment because they fall wholly within the field of the inner life". In contrast, the modern rule of law consisted of a few necessary features, which were common to all. Laws were established by the rationality of free individuals. Laws were impersonal. They had to be rational and written. Burke's appeal to tradition and custom was rejected by Hegel, as such attitudes developed ill feeling and hatred for all laws and legislations. For conferring legitimacy to tradition, one had to go back to a situation that existed before tradition began, namely the animal kingdom of the state of nature, where only the law of the jungle prevailed. All traditions were based on "the irrational power of brute force". The purpose of written and codified law was that people would know about it. For getting conformity and consent of the governed, laws had to reflect intelligible rules.

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> ... rulers who have given a national law to their people in the form of a well-arranged and clear cut legal code ... have been the greatest benefactors of their peoples, [and that] to hang the laws so high that no citizen could read them ... is injustice of one and the same kind as to bury them in row upon row of learned towns, collections of dissenting judgements and opinions, records of custom, etc., and in a dead language too, so that knowledge of the law of the land is accessible only to those who have made it to their professional study.

The Universal Class

One of the most important components of the Hegelian state was the class of civil servants or the bureaucracy. This class became the universal class because of its commitment to impartiality. Unlike the other groups of civil society, which were primarily interested in their own progression or business, the civil service performed the stupendous service of supervising the entire societal apparatus, which Hegel called the public business. This class of people would not be recruited from the nobility, but from the modern middle classes, which symbolized "the consciousness of right and the developed intelligence of the mass of people". For this reason, it becomes "the pillar of the state so far as honesty and intelligence are concerned". Not heredity, but "knowledge and proof of ability" were the criteria for recruitment.

Hegel, in developing this philosophy of the civil service, differentiated the modern constitutional state from the *polis* and oriental despotism, and pointed to the relative impersonality of the bureaucracy. The constitutional state retained its independence from its ruling groups by the mechanisms of free institutions and a civil service. The state was not the personal property of an individual or a group. It placed more emphasis on institutional constraints, defining and limiting the power of government rather than depending on virtues of statesmen or citizens. This was because modern constitutionalism was suspicious of the abilities of men in power to control their passions, and prevent abuse of power by the rulers. The rule of law and not rule of men reflected the concern of modern societies. The modern constitutional state could not act in a partisan manner.

The civil service, like Plato's Guardians, had the interests of the commonwealth in mind. Hegel was categorical that the bureaucracy should be open to all citizens on the basis of ability and citizenship. Civil servants should have fixed salaries so that they could resist the temptations of civil society. Unlike Plato's guardians, the universal class functioned within a framework where the special interests expressed themselves legitimately within the Assembly of Estates and autonomous corporations.

The indispensability of the state was demonstrated by the fact that the individual qualities and potentialities of good life could be realized only through the state. It was the destiny of the individual to identify with the universal and the truth, and not with incorrect notions of individuality that rejected social values and championed the cause of individual eccentricities. The state, in Hegelian terms, was the divine will, "in the sense that it is mind present on earth, unfolding itself to be the actual shape and organization of a world". The state was the most sublime of all human institutions, the final culmination which embodied both mind and spirit. Its strength was in providing the mechanism for the realization of the ideal—the synthesis of the individual interest with that of the state. In case of conflict between the individual interests and those of the large whole, the citizen would identify with those of the state, rather than pursue one's own interests. The state was the individual writ large.

The Monarchy

The monarchy, for Hegel, was a functional requirement of the modern constitution. This modern constitution accepted separation and division of powers. He went to the extent of saying that division of power guaranteed freedom. Hegel differentiated between the doctrines of the separation of powers from his own innovative theory of inward differentiation of constitutional powers.

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Separation of powers was rejected as a false doctrine, as it supported total autonomy and the independence of each functioning category. His model portrayed all these categories as mutually supporting aspects of the same totality.

> ... the constitution is rational in so far as the state inwardly differentiates and determines its activity in accordance with the nature of the concept. The result of this is that each of these powers is in itself the totality of the constitution, because each contains the other moments and has them effective in itself s.

Hegel's supreme concern was to find a method by which he could secure the unity and integrity of the state. Absolute separation of powers led either to a stalemate, or to self-destruction of the state. To avoid this, Hegel's prescription was that the crown, the executive and the legislative body would have legally differentiated spheres, with harmony and cooperation among these bodies as necessary for guaranteeing freedom to its citizens. "Sovereignty depends on the fact that the particular functions and powers of the state are not self-subsistent or firmly grounded but have their roots ultimately in the unity of the state as their single self.

Interdependence and a cooperative attitude of the three important branches were the preconditions of continuance of the sovereign state. Monarchy at the apex was supposed to signify this unity. The monarch was the tangible expression of all the features of the constitution. Hegel opposed the idea of an elected monarchy or the American-style presidency, for even though it might be an expression of the popular will, it was merely a small portion of the constitution. That was an insufficient basis, as the monarch in his own self-embodied the entire constitution and not just one portion of it.

> The power of the crown contains in itself the three moments of the whole, viz. (a) the universality of the constitution and the laws, (b) counsel, which refers the particular to the universal; and (c) the moment of ultimate decision, as the self determination to which everything else reverts and from which everything else derives the beginning of its actuality .

Monarchy was an important institution for Hegel, as it solved the problem of identifying national sovereignty. It was a legalistic argument, for it tried to locate where the sovereignty resided. Since this task could not be performed by popular sovereignty, it was rejected. The people represented a mere abstraction. Following Hobbes and Austin, Hegel argued that since the manifestation of the state was one, its head should also be an identifiable one. This guarantee was not provided by any single person, but by the *institution* of monarchy. The deeper meaning of this was that it was immaterial who that person was, and because of this, hereditary succession was the best plausible one. Hegel's monarch was "in essence characterized as the individual in abstraction from all his other characteristics, and this individual is raised to the dignity of monarchy in an immediate natural fashion, that is, by accident of birth". For holding this symbolic office of unity, physical power or intellectual gifts were not necessary.

Sovereignty, both in the *de jure* and *de facto* senses, rested with the state. However, sovereignty, which stipulated that all functions were ultimately rooted in the state, was not to be found in despotic rule or in a feudal state. Hegel had very little faith in popular sovereignty. Instead of a democratically elected legislature, he conceived of an Assembly of Estates which would represent the different interests with some link in matters of public concern.

Hegel's defence of monarchy had to be understood on the basis of his philosophical framework to find out rational arrangements within the existing institutions. It was not a descent into mysticism as Marx thought, nor did Hegel provide "the most specious reasoning that ever disgraced a philosopher" as he tried to prove by dialectical logic that state sovereignty was to reside in a hereditary monarch, but rather to concretize functional differentiation with unity (Hook 1958 : 156). Hegel was not interested in finding a philosophic ruler, like Plato nor was he trying to depict

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a future based on human emancipation within a framework of true democracy like Marx. Such ideas were negations of the entire approach of Hegel, which is based on the assumption that the *real is rational*, and that the *immediate present* and not the future is the concern.

War and International Relations

One of the most controversial aspects of Hegel's political philosophy, in sharp contrast to the optimism of the Enlightenment, was his assertion that war "preserves the ethical health of peoples". He repudiated the liberal theory of obligation for confusing civil society with the state. He commented :

> ... an entirely distorted account of the demand for this sacrifice results from regarding the state as a mere civil society and from regarding its final end as only the security of individual life and property. This security cannot possibly be obtained by the sacrifice what is to be secured on the contrary.

Civil society was an arena of life motivated by subjectivity, a creation of the modern world created by Christianity, and the doctrine of natural rights which did not perceive the human individual as a political animal but as possessors of certain inalienable rights which the state had to protect. Self-interest was the guiding force of civil society, with Smith's "invisible hand" as the controlling agency of economic transactions and of ensuring the mutual satisfaction of individual needs. Unity of civil society developed unconsciously by exchange of goods and services at the market place. Hegel's essential argument was that the aim of civil society was different from that of the state, and this differentiation was the key to understanding Hegel's theory of war and international relations.

The state, i.e. the "political state", was an ethical community. It was not an instrument for advancing one's material interests. It was not based on brute force, where obedience came out of coercion and fear. It was a union much above all these, which emphasized shared values and demanded common sacrifice. Obligation to such an entity flowed not from fear, but from a shared view of good life. The emphasis was on the ethical, spiritual and material characters of the state. Hegel's defence of war was derived from the argument that the ethical nature of the state was preserved by war. As an ethical entity, it could resort to war in order to maintain itself. War was a moment in the ethical life of the state.

> War is not to be regarded as an absolute evil and as a purely external accident, which itself therefore has some accidental cause, be it injustices, the passions of nations or the holders of power, etc., or in short, something or other which ought not to be. It is to what is by nature accidental that accidents happen, and the fate whereby they happen is thus a necessity. Here as elsewhere, the point of view from which things seem pure accident vanishes if we look at them in the light of the concept and philosophy because philosophy knows accident for a show and sees in it its essence, necessity.

War raised the level of consciousness from mere material possessions and interests. During wars, common values and commitments were not only preserved, but also enhanced. Prolonged peace led to the mistaken belief that the state existed only for civil society. War had both a negative and a positive utility. Negatively, it demonstrated the limitations of the material world, and positively, it united people for a common goal. The argument was as follows.

> In order not to let them get rooted and settled in this isolation and thus break up the whole into fragments and let the common spirit evaporate, government has from time to time to shake them to the very center by War. By this means it confounds the order that has been established and arranged, and violates their right to independence, while the individuals ... are made, by the task thus imposed on them by government, to feel the power of their lord and master, death. By thus breaking up the form of fixed stability, spirit guards the ethical order from sinking into merely natural existence,

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> preserve the self of which it is conscious, and raises that self to the level of freedom and its own powers.
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> Again :
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> War is the state of affairs which deals in earnest with the vanity of temporal goods and concerns—a vanity at other times a common theme of edifying sermonizing. This is what makes it the moment in which the ideal of the particular attains its right and is actualized. War has the higher significance that by its agency ... the ethical health of peoples is preserved in their indifference to the stabilization of finite institutions; just as the blowing of the winds preserves the sea from the foulness which would be the result of prolonged calm, so also corruption in nations would be a product of prolonged, let alone "perpetual peace".

The above two passages had to be integrated with Hegel's overall perception of the state, and not merely as a definite indicator for glorifying war. He was concerned with the actualities of the state. He accepted the fact that a state might be formed by violence. But violence could not be the final quest. A founder's mettle was to be gauged by his ability to create and stabilize political institutions which replaced violence and force. But what Hegel ignored in this formulation was the fact that a relatively peaceful transformation, rather than force, was always more conducive to building stable political institutions. Added to this was also the fact that only those revolutions were able to institutionalize liberty which kept their ambit limited to the political, and not encroached the social.

For Hegel, war performed particular and important functions : first, in establishing a state; and second, when the state was well-established, as a mechanism of preserving the state from the inevitable conflicts generated by a market within civil society. It was necessary to act to create a public spirit and go beyond limited private interests. It was in a warlike situation that courage and honour became important. On this, Hegel wrote :

> Courage to be sure is multiform. The mettle of an animal or a brigand, courage for the sake of honor, the courage of a knight, these are not true forms of courage. The true courage of civilized nations is readiness for sacrifice in the service of the state, so that the individual counts as only as one amongst many. The important thing here is not personal mettle but aligning oneself with the universal. In India five hundred men conquered twenty thousand who were not cowards, but who only lacked this disposition to work in close cooperation with others.

Hegel was categorical that since modern political institutions were different from ancient ones in purpose, ambit, scale and mechanism, modern warfare was also totally different from the ancient one. In the ancient heroic societies, individual bravery in war and conquest was one of the important indicators of human excellence. It was an individual glorification. But in the modern period, personal pride was subordinated to a larger impersonal category, the state. Personal honour and bravery were replaced by a larger cause or ideal. The modern hero mingled with the universal.

Hegel also believed that since modern warfare was impersonal, it was destined to become less barbaric and more humane than what it was in the past. He also asserted that the invention of the gun would make wars more rational, rather than based on personal whims and fancies, including personal enmity. He wrote : "It is for this reason that thought had invented the gun, and the invention of this weapon which has changed the purely personal form of bravery into a more abstract one, is no accident".

Hegel explicitly rejected the Kantian notion of perpetual peace.

> Perpetual peace is often advocated as an ideal towards which humanity should strive. With that end in view, Kant proposed a league of monarchs to adjust differences between states, and the Holy Alliance was meant to be a league of much the same

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> kind. But the state is an individual, and individuality essentially implies negation. Hence even if a number of states make themselves into a family, this group as an individual must engender an opposite and create an enemy.

Hegel's skepticism of international law emanated from his belief that the causes of war were sown deeply in human nature, and as such no solution could be found on the basis of legal formulations. Another argument against international law was that a state had an inherent right to act as a state, which no contract could curtail. As there was no superior power to enforce international law, states existed in a "state of nature" in relationship to one another. As a result, international law, like the categorical imperative, remained only in the realm of *ought* and not *is*. Hegel wrote :

> The fundamental proposition of international law ... is that treaties, as the ground of obligations between states, ought to be kept. But since the sovereignty of a state is the principle of its relations to others, states are to that extent in a state of nature in relation to each other. Their rights are actualized only in their particular wills and not in a universal will with constitutional powers over them. This universal proviso of international law therefore does not go beyond an ought-to-be and what really happens is that international relations in accordance with treaty alternate with severance of these relations.

In the relationship between nations, Hegel discounted tightness or wrong as categories. He recognized the inevitable existence of a variety of regimes or constitutions, without any attempt to grade them. So war reflected a situation of two rights. There was nothing called a "just" war. The only court of appeal for Hegel was the process of history itself, which decided who was right at that moment, "the history of the world is the world's court of judgement". Both Hegel and Hobbes cynically rejected the claim of the bourgeois state to be under international law. As such, "Hegel's idealism comes to the same conclusion as did Hobbes' materialism".

10.5 Dialectics

Hegel's dialectical method played a crucial role in his political philosophy. By applying the categories of a *thesis*, an *antithesis* and a *synthesis*, Hegel's major thrust was to solve the problem of contradiction. It attempted to reconcile the many apparent contradictory positions and theories developed by earlier thought processes. As a method of interpretation, it attempted to reconcile the various different traits developed in the past. He never claimed to be its inventor, and even acknowledged that the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates used it.

Hegel's own use of the dialectical method originated with his identification of Kantian critical theory, which meant rejection of the Enlightenment philosophical method based on the scientific approach of studying nature. Crucial to this method was a belief that accuracy came out of a method of reduction, which meant that knowledge emerged out of the detailed study and analysis of parts. Descartes, for example, took recourse to mathematics in search of true knowledge. In Descartes' words, "to divide up each of the difficulties which I examined into as many parts as possible, and as seemed requisite in order that it might be resolved in the best manner possible". Critical philosophy questioned the utility of this method in seeking answers to moral problems which arose out of free will and initiation. In this situation, the scientific method became inappropriate.

Hegel's dialectical method presupposed that ideas and beliefs were to be related to their institutions and social structures, i.e. the spheres of the subjective mind and the objective mind had to converge. The categories of subject and object were to go together, as did theory and practice. What apparently looked contradictory were actually dialectical terms, interdependent. This method was to be internally linked to the subject matter. It did not just record and observe, but attempted to build an edifice of a well-connected discourse, which one may accept or reject. It accepted dialogue and

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conversation, and as R.G. Collingwood pointed out, the very basis of the dialectical method is a "constant endeavour to convert every occasion of non-agreement into an occasion of agreement".

For Hegel, dialectics was "the only true method" for comprehending pure thought. He described dialectics as

> ... the indwelling tendency outwards by which the one-sidedness and limitation of the predicates of understanding is seen in its true light... the Dialectical principle constitutes the life and soul of scientific progress, the dynamic which alone gives immanent connect and necessity to the body of science.

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel gave an example of its use in human consciousness, but a more comprehensive political use was found in the *Philosophy of Right*, in which the dialectical process reflected the evolution of world history from the Greek world to Hegel's time.

For Hegel, there was a dialectical pattern in history, with the state representing the ultimate body, highly complex, formed as a result of a synthesis of contradictory elements at different levels of social life. However, the relationship between contradiction and synthesis was within concepts shaped by human practices. Marx too discerned a dialectical pattern in history, but then understood contradictions between the means and relations of production at different stages of history.

Praising Hegel's method, Marx wrote to Engels:

> In the *method* of treatment the fact that by mere accident I again glanced through Hegel's *Logic* has been of great service to me ... . If there should ever be time for such work again, I would greatly like to make accessible to the ordinary human intelligence, in two or three printer's sheets, what is *rational* in the method which Hegel discovered but at the same time enveloped into mysticism.

However, like many other unfulfilled desires of Marx, namely writing a book on Hegel's political philosophy or a book on the theory of the state, he could never find time to provide for this rational explanation of the dialectical method.

Popper argued that it was possible that contradictions remained in our theoretical perception of reality, but it was impossible that such contradictions were a part of reality itself. Popper argued that our perceptions might be incorrect, but that was not true of reality itself. Scientific progress revealed elimination of contradictions from our perceptions till they reached the proper nature of reality itself. Unlike Hegel, Popper believed that the methods of the natural sciences and those of the social sciences were identical. In this observation, Popper was closer to Descartes than to Hegel.

10.6 Popper's Critique

Popper launched a frontal attack on Hegel as a major enemy of the open society along with Plato and Marx. He stressed the origins of Hegel's historicism to three ideas developed by Aristotle : (a) linking individual or state development to a historical evolution; (b) a theory of change that accepted concepts like an undeveloped essence or potentiality; and (c) the reality or actuality of any object was reflected by change. The first one led to the historicist method, which in Hegel assumed a form of "worship of history"; the second one linked the underdeveloped essence of destiny, and the third helped Hegel to formulate his theory of domination and submission, justifying the master-slave relationship. Hegel, asserted Popper, was a true disciple of Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle. His initial success in evolving a new philosophical method of enquiry was mainly due to the underdeveloped nature of German science at that time. It was an "age of dishonesty", in which Hegel became an important philosopher with the backing and patronage of the Prussian state. No wonder Hegelianism was an apology for Prussianism. In the context of subsequent history, Hegelian historicism and the doctrine of modern totalitarianism were identical. Hegel's

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principle aim was "to fight against the open society, and thus to serve his employer, Frederick William of Prussia".

Popper, like Rudolph Haym, was very critical of Hegel's deification of the state. He was also critical of the bureaucracy's role in stabilizing society. He was critical of Hegel for his historicism and approach to the social sciences, which assumed that historical prediction was their principal aim, and which assumed that this aim was attainable by discovering the "rhythm" or the "pattern" : the laws or the trends that underly the evolution of history.

Popper also argued that Hegel's identification of the rational with the actual inevitably led to a philosophy of the pure politics of power, where might was right. The irrational forms of "state worship" led to the "renaissance of tribalism". Another important fallacy in Hegel was that he admitted that since the process of history was partly controlled by the direction of knowledge, and since that direction could not be predicted, there was a gross underestimation of this factor of openness and unpredictability in Hegel.

Interestingly, immediately after Hegel's death in 1831 (when Hegel was 'canonized' by the Prussian state), apart from the beginning of the two parallel streams of right Hegelianism and left Hegelianism, one important criticism appeared which raised many of the points raised by Popper. In 1839, K.E. Schubart rejected Hegel's doctrine both as a Prussian and a Protestant. He questioned Hegel's insistence that Prussia was a constitutional monarchy, as according to him it was not one since Prussia was a dynastic state. It was an absolute monarchy. "It is always the monarch through whom all others act and can act". Kaufmann, criticizing Popper, wrote, "it would be absurd to represent Hegel as a radical individualist but [it] is equally absurd to claim as Popper does, that Hegel's state is totalitarian". Popper ignored the spheres of "subjective freedom" in the Hegelian system.

Singer criticized Popper on the following grounds : (a) all his quotations were not from Hegel's own writings; (b) one of them was a mis-translation; (c) the Hegelian state did not incorporate only the government but referred to the entire social life—there was no glorification of the government against the people; and (d) the Popper quotations needed balancing by others. But in spite of such criticism, Singer acknowledged "that the extravagant language Hegel used to describe the state, and his idea that true freedom is to be found in rational choices, are both wide open to misuse and distortion in the service of totalitarianism is undeniable; but that it is a misuse is equally undeniable" (Singer 1983 : 43). Cassirer stated that "Hegel could extol and glorify the state, he could even apotheosize it. There is, however, a clear and unmistakable difference between his idealizations that is the characteristic of our modern totalitarian system". Similarly, Marcuse also pointed out the many fundamental differences between Hegel's presumptions and National Socialism.

However, all these critics of Popper did not endorse many of the authoritarian implications of Hegel's political philosophy. Their objection was the parallel between Hegel's authoritarianism and twentieth-century totalitarianism, as there was a debate in Marxist theory about the exact relationship between nineteenth-century Marxism and twentieth-century Communism. But here one could point out a serious limitation in Hegelian enterprise, as it was in the Marxist one, that it could not envisage that a serious misuse of its framework was possible. If Hegel was interpreted in this light, then Popper's criticism of Hegel became relevant for our times. One need not always agree with Skinner's argument, "to demand from the history of thought a solution to our immediate problems is thus to commit not merely a methodological fallacy, but something like a moral error". A history of political theory was not merely an intellectual history, and the primacy of the political is always there. The continued attraction of the classics was in their handling important themes like justice, education, rights, welfare, international relations and equity, and what we could learn from them and incorporate in enriching our own vision. In this sense, Locke and Kant remain closer to us now than Hegel and Marx. Rawls begins with Kant, and Nozick with Locke,

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but no such attempt has flown from either German idealism or German Marxism. In this sense, they were both locally dated.

Self -Assessment

Fill in the blanks :

1. George Wilhelm Friedrich was a ..... philosopher.
2. In January 1801 two years after the death of his father, Hegel finished with tutoring and went to Jena where he took a position as ..... at the University of Jena.
3. The first major work Hegel published is ..... .
4. On November 14, 1831 Hegel died of ..... in Berlin.
5. Hegel's famous quote in reference to the theory of state is ..... .

10.7 Summary

- In the entire tradition of Western political theory of over 2000 years, no other thinker aroused as much controversy about the meaning of his discourse as Hegel did. Hegel himself was partially responsible for this, as his works were difficult to dissect and because of the critical nature of his philosophy and the operation of the dialectics, the inner essence was always vulnerable to more than one plausible interpretation. As such, the debate as to whether Hegel was a conservative, a liberal or a totalitarian, would continue for the coming years. Complicating the problem was the assertion by Hegel that history as a mode of fundamental shifts and changes had ended during his own time. He looked upon the 1806 war in Jena as the last war, for by then the liberal principles of liberty and equality had become the acceptable principles of a modern state in most advanced countries, and there were no other principles than the ones that liberalism advanced .
- Marx realized the formidable dominance of Hegelian philosophy, and compared it with the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. He stressed that Hegel's philosophy could be attacked only from within and not from outside, which meant that Hegel could be criticized on the basis of the rational and critical standards that he had evolved. Because of this reason, Marxian materialism was dialectically linked to Hegelian idealism. Marx used all the categories of Hegel and remained a Hegelian throughout his life. Moreover. Marx used Hegelian terms to criticize the liberal state and projected Communism as not only superior, but also perfect. The collapse of Communism raised "the question of whether Hegel's Universal History was not in the end the more prophetic one ... communism did not represent a *higher* stage than liberal democracy, it was part of the *same* stage of history that would eventually universalize the spread of liberty and equality to all parts of the world". Interestingly, though Marx made a dialectical critique of Hegel on all the major European themes, he accepted Hegel's analysis on the Orient without subjecting it to a dialectical critique. Hegel's Eurocentricism overwhelmed even his bitterest critic.
- Hegel was part of the Eurocentric tradition which began with Montesquieu and inspired the entire gamut of thinkers who subscribed to what Edward Said called Orientalism. In spite of his belief in universal history, Hegel remained a child of his times, unable to transcend the prejudices of his time. This was borne out by his criticism of the Reform Act of 1832, the first major electoral reform movement in England. Contrast Hegel's reactions with those of Rammohun Roy, who, coming from a relatively backward colonial country, could comprehend the tremendous progressive content of the act.
- Hegel also lacked a proper understanding of the role of science in changing the societal process. Even here, his French contemporary Saint Simon grasped the dynamics of the industrial technocratic society, which enabled him to predict a future European Union. The

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fact remained that "far from genuinely marking an end of history, Hegel's thesis was itself a key expression of the history of his time and place". Though Hegel himself said as a matter of general rule that "all philosophy is its own time apprehended in thought", his own effort was no exception.

- Hegel's political philosophy was contained in his *Philosophy of Right*. In his earlier writings he tried to establish a correlation between classical philosophical tradition, particularly the legacy of Kant and Fichte, and the changing scenario that became imminent with the French Revolution. "Hegelian political philosophy goes beyond the idealism of Kant and of Fichte to embody an historical, evolutionary doctrine which transforms the will into an aspect of pure abstract intelligence".
- In an unpublished essay, *The German Constitution* (1801), Hegel attempted to delineate a workable definition of the state in order to counter the radicalism of the French revolutionary wars and the traditional political system in Germany. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he evoked the Greek *polis* as the symbol of political cohesion and compactness, and at the same time expressed his doubts about its realization in the modern world based on subjectivity. In his *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopedia*, Hegel gave us a systematic exposition of the method of dialectics, and integrated it with his political philosophy as outlined in the *Philosophy of Right*.
- Hegel rejected the instrumentalist conception of the state as a political community for the promotion and protection of individual aspirations and ambitions. The state therefore "was no utilitarian institution, engaged in the commonplace business of providing public services, administering the law, performing public duties and adjusting industrial and economic interests" (Sabine 1973 : 641). The state safeguarded subjective freedom, the hallmark of modern society, but it was an ethical entity whose objectives and goals were rooted in interpersonal relationships that transcended individual wishes and caprice. However, the Hegelian state did not permit individual judgement or choice. It emphasized obedience. "Hegel failed to make clear a belief that the modern state does protect the right of choice. The effect of Hegelian theory emerging in authoritarian systems has been to reaffirm the expressed belief that individual choice is caprice and sentimentality".
- The *Philosophy of Right* did not discuss certain important components of the modern political system, like political parties or pressure groups. Though essentially anti-democratic, Hegel placed considerable emphasis on public opinion and advocated limited freedom of the press. The theory did not provide a definite doctrine of political obligation.
- The basic problem with Hegel's liberalism was that it was ambiguous and placed a great deal of emphasis on the state. This could be attributed to the fact that liberal institutions did not exist in the Germany of his time. Moreover, liberalism as a creed and way of life was essentially English in character and outlook. However, Hegel was not an enemy of liberalism, for he emphatically defended the idea of freedom. "The connection between freedom and the other virtues is emphasized by Hegel as by no other author". He rejected the conception of freedom as absence of restraints as being abstract, for it lacked substance. The primacy of individual preference detached from other factors normally took shape in uncommon situations, and as such that kind of freedom could not be considered genuine freedom. He recognized the incompleteness and weakness of atomistic liberal individualism, and sought to replace it with one where society was the overall framework for the realization of individual freedom and autonomy. Unlike the thinkers of the Anglo-Saxon world who emphasized liberty and individuality, Hegel stressed freedom and rationality. In obeying the state, the individual was acting freely and rationally. Hegel was too authoritarian to be a liberal, and too liberal to be authoritarian.

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- Hegel exerted considerable influence on subsequent political theory, particularly Marxism and Existentialism. He has been claimed as the philosophical inspiration by both Communists and Fascists. The British Idealist T.H. Green adapted Hegelianism to revise liberalism in the late nineteenth century. Hegel influenced Bergson, Croce, John Dewey (1859-1952), Heidegger (1889-1976), Jaspers, Kierkegaard, and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980).
- Another important aspect of Hegel was his critical rationality. His questioning of the entire political process opened up a new dimension of the otherwise conservative side of him. His was a searching mind, always looking for answers to new and old questions, essentially accepting Galileo's assertion that "still it moves". This only proved that it is difficult to theorize or philosophize without acknowledging *some* debt to Hegel.

10.8 Key–Words

1. Privatdozent : Unsalaried lectures.
2. Preparatory school : Gymnasium
3. Endpoint : Final goal
4. Antithesis : Contingency

10.9 Review Questions

1. Comment on Hegel's dialectical method.
2. What were the major influences on Hegel ?
3. What did Hegel mean by "real is rational" ?
4. What is Hegel's Philosophy of History ?
5. Explain the statement 'the state is the march of God on Earth'.
6. What are Hegel's views about freedom of the Individual ?

Answers- Self Assessment

1. German
2. Privatdozent
3. Phenomenology of spirit
4. Cholera
5. What is rational in actual and what is actual is rational.

10.10 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Kirandeep Singh, Lovely Professional University

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Unit 11: Karl Marx: His Life and Works, Materialism and Dialectical Materialism

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Objectives

After studying this unit Students will be able to

- Know about Karl Marx Life and his Work.
- Discuss Marx's as a poet.
- Explain doctoral dissertation.
- Understand dialectics.
- Discuss materialism and history.

Introduction

Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883) was truly the last of the great critics in the Western intellectual tradition. His ideas exerted a decisive influence on all aspects of human endeavour, and transformed the study of history and society. They significantly changed anthropology, the arts, cultural studies, history, law, literature, philosophy, political economy, political theory and sociology by establishing a link between economic and intellectual life. By developing a theory of *praxis*, i.e. unity of thought and action, Marx brought about a sea change in the entire methodology of the social sciences. He was "a brilliant agitator and polemicist, a profound economist, a great sociologist, an incomparable historian.

However, from its very inception Marxism was faced with a variety of criticism and critical acclaim. In fact, the controversies within Marxism are such that Marxism, like Liberalism, has become an umbrella ideology. In the context of Marx's writings, scholars spoke of two Marx: the young and the old. The young Marx was concerned with alienation, human nature and morality; the old was more deterministic, with his in-depth study of the workings of capitalism. The link between the two was the *Grundrisse* (1857-1858) and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859).

Another crucial fact was that four of Marx's writings were written in collaboration with Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), his friend and comrade. After Marx's death, Engels edited and published

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some of his works as Marx's disciple, raising questions about how much was Marx's original, and what were Engels' interpretations. It is generally believed that Marx generalized on the basis of particular events, i.e. from the particular to the general. Engels on the other hand was more deterministic, analyzing from the general to the particular (Carver 1981). Engels acknowledged Marx as a genius, while, at best, he was talented. Marx was an innovator, and Engels the popularizer.

Did u know? Marx was the first thinker to bring together the various strands of socialist thought into both a coherent world view and an impassioned doctrine of struggle".

To comprehend the major thrust of Marx's political philosophy that aimed at human liberation, it is noteworthy to take into account the significant shift that occurred in the late seventeenth century when traditional analysis of the political order based on scarcity was replaced by a philosophy of abundance. This meant that poverty and disparities once seen as natural, inherent and inevitable were now considered man made and hence solvable. The liberal writings of Locke and Jefferson reflected this libertarian dimension. However, the failure of early liberalism to fulfill its own promise led to the crystallization of socialist ideas.

The liberal theory hinged on two principles, namely politics as involving non-coercive solutions to antagonistic interests, and the importance of democratic methods as being effective in making these adjustments. Though it took cognizance of the Hegelian critique of individualism, it did not accept two of its major assumptions. The first was that society moved, balancing the antithetical forces which generated social change by their schisms and strifes, and second, that social history was inherent in the very forces that generated them. These aspects of Hegelian philosophy played a pivotal role in the political theory of the nineteenth century, and later primarily due to the transformation brought about by Marx. Conflict played a crucial role in both Hegelian and Marxist political theory, thereby ruling out peaceful adjustment for the mutual advantage of the contending parties.

Marx interpreted liberalism and classical economics as articulating and defending the interests of the middle class. He proposed to create a social philosophy that was in tune with the aspirations of the rising proletariat. Like Hegel, he looked upon the French Revolution as an indication of the demise of feudalism, but while Hegel contended that the Revolution would culminate in the emergence of nation states, Marx looked upon it as a prelude to a more fundamental and total revolution beyond the nation states. The French Revolution, which brought the middle class to the forefront with the destruction of the nobility, was essentially a *political* revolution. The next step to be undertaken was a *social* revolution which would be brought about by the proletariat. It should be pointed out that Francois Noel Gracchus Babeuf (1760-1797) was the first to point out the contradictions within the revolutionary slogans of liberty and equality. He advocated socialization of industry and land to complete the Revolution that began in France in 1789.

Socialism carried forward the Libertarian element of early Liberalism in its call for total human emancipation. Marx disparagingly dubbed the Socialists who preceded him as "Utopians", for their emphasis on class harmony and non-revolutionary politics. The label "Utopian socialists" was first used by Jerome Blanqui in the *History of Political Economy* (1839) Marx learnt a lot from these Utopian socialists, and borrowed more of their ideas than he ever cared to admit. The relationship between the early Socialists and Marx was similar to the one that Plato shared with the Sophists. Like Marx, Plato disparaged Sophism, but was indebted to its ideas. Marx described his socialism as "scientific". Having studied the laws of social development and of capitalism, he sought to prove that the destruction of capitalism was inevitable, for it had given rise to its own "grave diggers".

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Some of the ideas that the early Socialists articulated were a centrally planned economy, equal income, production for use and common good, and not for profit, common ownership of property, and moral indignation at inequities and injustices between the possessing and the non-propertied classes. They looked down on capitalism as a wasteful and inefficient system, for it led to poverty, unemployment and squalor. Capitalism was evil because it produced a class-divided society. It made human beings selfish, acquisitive and ruthlessly competitive, making them lose their natural instincts of compassion, fellow-feeling and solidarity. Their critique of capitalism was both practical and ethical. Many, in fact nearly all these ideas were reiterated by Marx, except that he proved that the destruction of capitalism was inevitable because of certain consequences it produced. The early Socialists, on the contrary, sought to bring about the desired changes by appealing to the feelings of human brotherhood and solidarity. They could not visualize the mechanisms of changing capitalism, as they wrote at a time when it was too early to foresee the course of development of capitalism. Their credit lay in the fact that they did not harp on a golden age of the past of a pre-capitalist period, but were aware of the fact that there was no going back in history. Instead, they chose to humanize contemporary reality.

Did u know? Marx was the first spokesman for socialism to remove the earlier Utopian fantasies and eccentricities, the first to present the socialist ideal not as a mere pleasing dream but as a historically realizable goal, indeed as a goal that history had brought to the very threshold of possibility.

Marx inherited and integrated three legacies—German philosophy, French political thought and English economics—in his theoretical construct. From the German intellectual tradition, he borrowed the Hegelian method of dialectics and applied it to the material world. From the French Revolutionary tradition, he accepted the idea that apocalyptic change motivated by a "messianic" idea was not only desirable, but also feasible. He applied his method with a view to bringing about large-scale changes within the industrialized capitalist economy, of which England was the classic model in the nineteenth century. He used the writings of the English classical economists to understand the dynamics of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution . He believed that historical movement took place according to laws that were similar to the ones found in the natural world. In the preface to the *Capital* (1861-1879), he spoke of the "natural laws of capitalist production". England, being the most developed society in his time, was the subject of his study. The purpose of his focus was to lay down, the road other societies would travel.

Intrinsically, it is not a question of the higher or lower degree of development of the social antagonisms that result from the natural laws of capitalist production. It is a question of these laws themselves, of these tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results. The country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed, the image of its own future.

The emphasis on action and revolution made Marx a philosopher, a social scientist and a revolutionary. Though he used Hegelian concepts, he gave them very different meanings. The critique of Hegelian idealism and the materialist interpretation of history—the core of Marxism—crystallized in the writings of Marx in the early part of his adult life. His early writings (the poems written to Jenny von Westphalen and his doctoral thesis entitled *The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophies of Nature* [1839-1841]) contained the genesis of Marxist theory. He acknowledged Hegel to be a "Giant thinker", but his poems and doctoral thesis showed his dissatisfaction with German (and, in particular, Hegelian) idealism, though in many respects he continued with Hegelian philosophy.

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Did u know? The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. —**Marx**

Marx removed from Hegel's theory the assumption that national cultures are the effective units of social history—an assumption that never had any close logical relation to his system—and replaced the struggle of nations with the struggle of social classes. Thus he took away from Hegelianism its distinctive qualities as a political theory—its nationalism, its conservatism and its counter-revolutionary character—and transformed it into a new and very powerful type of revolutionary radicalism. Marxism became the progenitor of the more important modifications to be, of present day communism.

11.1 Life Sketch

Marx was born on March 5, 1818 in the predominantly Catholic city of Trier in the Rhineland in a Jewish family. His father Heinrich, a son of Marx Levi, was a rabbi in Trier. The surname Marx was the abbreviated form of Mordechai, later changed to Markus. The paternal side had an illustrious ancestry. Heinrich's father was a successful lawyer. His uncle Lion Philips was a successful businessman who later founded the famous Philips Electric Company. Heinrich converted himself to Lutheranism in 1817, but did not abandon his religion. His wife Henriette converted herself in 1825. Karl converted himself in 1824. Perhaps it was the consciousness of his Jewish background that heightened his awareness about "his sense of marginality, his ambivalence toward society, and eventually of his conflicting qualities—thinker and prophet, scientist and moralist".

Marx studied law at the University of Bonn in 1835 and at the University of Berlin in 1836. He changed his course to philosophy under the influence of the young Hegelians. He completed his doctorate in philosophy in 1841. The accession of Wilhelm IV in 1840 sealed Marx's prospects for an academic career. Marx married his childhood sweetheart, Jenny, daughter of Baron Ludwig von Westphalen, his spiritual guide since his adolescence in 1843. Jenny (six years older than Marx) and Marx married after a seven-year period of courtship. Together, they led a hard but happy life, though Jenny was known to have remarked that instead of writing the *Capital*, Marx could have made money.

From 1842 to 1848, Marx edited radical publications in the Rhineland, Belgium and France. He became the editor of the liberal *Rheinische Zeitung* which he remained till 1843. In 1844, while in Paris, he became interested in the working-class movement and political economy. Around this time, Marx and Engels began working on the *German Ideology* (1847).

In 1848, Marx and Engels helped in the founding of the Communist League, which existed till 1850. In 1848, Marx was expelled from the Prussian territories, compelling him to move to London, where he stayed till the end of his life. He worked and studied in the British Museum from 1850 to 1860. There was no evidence that Marx actually spoke to peasants, workers or landowners. Though he wrote about industrial and financial processes, he knew only two who were connected with them— his Uncle Philips and friend Engels. He wrote for the *New York Tribune*, which paid one pound for each of his articles, and that was his only regular income. He was helped financially by Engels. He lived a life of poverty, the reason being attributed to mishandling of money. Three of his six children died of want. His own health did not remain well. Jenny died in 1881. She played an extremely helpful role by editing Marx's manuscripts and preparing them for publication. Marx died on March 14,1883. He was buried at the Highgate cemetery in London. His death went unnoticed in Britain. It was the London correspondent in Paris who reported his death, which was featured in the *London Times*.

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11.2 Marx as a Poet

The poetic phase of Marx was short-lived. In his later life he did not show much interest in his own poems, though his interests in poetry in general continued. Marx was well-versed with the works of contemporary German poets and those of Shakespeare. This interest was further reinforced by his father Heinrich Marx and his mentor Baron von Westphalen. During his student years in Bonn University, Marx belonged to the poet's club. Even after he moved to Berlin, his interest in poetry continued. During this time he attempted to write fiction and a tragedy. Unfortunately, the poems written in the autumn of 1836 were lost. The ones that survived, written sometime in the early part of 1837, were also those that were dedicated to Jenny.

Marx's poems were not amongst his well-known works. His overall lack of interest in his poems was because everything seemed vague and diffused. In 1929, about 60 of his poems were discovered and published. However, this did not arouse much interest among Marxist scholars, as Marx had disowned their significance and importance from the point of view of revolutionary activity. These poems, as his early biographer Franz Mehring (1846-1919) admitted, "breathe(d) a spirit of trivial romanticism, and very seldom does any true note ring through".

A dissection of Marx's poems revealed his resolve for purposeful activity, signalling the beginning of Marx the revolutionary. This was evident from the following poem.

Never can I calmly realise,
What steadfastly grips my soul;
Never can I rest in comfort,
Storms forever through me roll.

Continuing with his revolt against abstract thought and his repudiation of German idealism, Marx wrote:

Kant and Fichte like to whirl in the ether,
Searching for a distant land;
While I only seek to understand completely,
What I found in this street.

Some of his epigrams revealed his dissatisfaction with the unrealism of Hegelian idealism, for it ignored realities and depicted the non-existent.

Pardon us creatures of epigram,
If we sing disagreeable tunes;
We have schooled ourselves in Hegel,
And from his aesthetics we have not yet been purged.
Because I have discovered the highest.
And found the depths by pondering;
I am roughen like a god, I hide in darkness, like him,
Long I searched and floated over the rocking sea of thoughts,
And when I found the word, I clung fast to what I had found.
Words I teach in a demonically confused to-do.
At least he will never more be restricted by limiting fetters,
For as out of a roaring flood pouring from a projecting rock;
The poet invents the words and thoughts of his beloved.
And perceives what he thinks and thinks what he feels;
Everyone can sip the refreshing nectar of wisdom,
After all, I am telling you everything because I have told you nothing.

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The concept of alienation that was Marx's concern during his early years was clearly depicted in his poem *The Player* (1840), and in *Oulanem*, a poetic tragedy. While in these, he understood alienation as an individual phenomenon, in the *Manuscripts* (1844) he saw it as a feature of society. Though the poems were written in the formative years, they indicated the direction of Marx's subsequent thought.

11.3 Marx's Doctoral Dissertation

Marx was not a direct disciple of Hegel, but his interest in Hegelian doctrines stemmed from his encounter with the Young Hegelians in the Doctors Club. It was during his discussions in the Doctors Club that Marx got interested in contemporary philosophy. The Young Hegelians were radical in their outlook. They were an amorphous group in Germany in the 1830s and 1840s, consisting of Bruno Bauer, Karl Kopper and Adolf Rutenderg. Among them, Bauer influenced Marx the most. Initially, the Young Hegelians were interested in religious questions, but with the accession of Frederick William IV and the relaxation of press censorship, they renewed their political debates. In philosophy, they could be described as speculative rationalists, for they believed in the continuous unfolding of the power of reason. They professed a deep admiration for the principles of the French Revolution. They were concerned with the individual's self-consciousness and its development. Their position was similar to that of the Epicureans, Skeptics and Stoics, the post-Aristotelian philosophers whom Marx described as rich in spirit.

The Young Hegelians regarded the post-Aristotelian philosophies as providing the foundations of modern thought, as precursors of the philosophy of self-awareness or consciousness. These philosophies emerged at a time when Rome was established drawing from the Greek heritage. The Greco-Roman tradition influenced the rise of Christianity and identified the principles of rationalism, akin to the ones in eighteenth-century Enlightenment. There were similarities between the post-Aristotelian and post-Hegelian philosophies, for both of them were preceded by the "total philosophies" of Plato, Aristotle and Hegel respectively. Marx felt that the choice before the Hegelians was either a feeble imitation of Hegel, or a deflection of the direction of philosophy. The dominant influence of Hegel in the 1830s and 1840s was acknowledged by Engels in the following words.

> ... the Hegelian system covered an incomparably greater domain than any earlier system and developed in this domain a wealth of thought which is astounding even today.... One can imagine what a tremendous effect this Hegelian system must have produced in the philosophy-tinged atmosphere of Germany. It was a triumphal procession which lasted for decades and which by no means came to a standstill on the death of Hegel. On the contrary, it was precisely from 1830 to 1840 that "Hegelianism" reigned most exclusively, and to a greater or lesser extent infected even its opponents.

Marx's choice of a comparative study of the philosophical systems of Epicures and of the Democritus (460-370 BC) was partly because of the influence of the Young Hegelians (whose company he enjoyed), and partly because of his quest of relating philosophy to the external world with a view to liberating the individual from all shackles through the power of reason. Marx criticized Hegel for belittling the contributions made by the post-Aristotelian philosophies. He contended that these theories held the "key to the true history of Greek Philosophy". In his doctoral thesis, Marx dealt with the relationship between Epicureanism and Stoicism, the concept of the sage in Greek philosophy, the ideas of Socrates and Plato on religion and the prospects of philosophy in the post-Hegelian period. Its appendix included Plutarch's critique of Epicures and two lengthy notes on Hegel and Schelling.

Marx contended that the task of philosophical criticism was to expose the hindrances to the process of free development of human self-consciousness. The idea of human liberation ran through

Marxist thought as a guiding force. Marx contended that the human mind was dynamic and capable of comprehending the external world, thereby criticizing those who argued that human beings were incapable of understanding the world around, and therefore had to blindly accept what appeared to be incognito phenomena. Marx was attracted by Epicurean philosophy for the spirit of freedom and independence of thought that it advocated. By this time, Marx began to perceive the transformative power of philosophy to change human society. Philosophy, in the process, would cease to be pure theory, as it would manifest itself in practical activity.

Marx characterized Epicures as a genuinely radical and enlightened mind of antiquity. In contrast to Democritus, Epicures provided energizing principles by introducing an element of spontaneity in the movements of, atoms, rather than regarding nature as inanimate, governed by mechanical laws. The two achievements of Epicures, according to Marx, were: (*a*) emphasis on absolute autonomy of the human spirit, freeing men from all superstitions of transcendent objects; and (*b*) emphasis on free, individual self-consciousness. Both these factors helped in circumventing the limits imposed by a "total philosophy". It was the liberating aspect of Epicures that Marx found endearing. Marx tried to refute Plutarch's critique of Epicures, examining each statement with a view to formulating a diametrically opposite conclusion.

11.4 Dialectics

Dialectical materialism is the philosophical programme of Marxism as defined by later Communists and their Parties (sometimes called "orthodox" Marxism). As the name signals, it is an outgrowth of both Hegal's dialectics and Ludwig Feuerbach's and Karl Marx's philosophical materialism, and is most directly traced to Marx's fellow thinker, Friedrich Engels. It uses the concepts of thesis, antithesis and synthesis to explain the growth and development of human history. Although Hegel and Marx themselves never used the "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" model to summarize dialectics or dialectical materialism, it is now commonly used to illustrate the essence of the method.

The degeneration of Marxist method within the USSR to a pseudo-scientific language, referred to as "diamat" (short for dialectical materialism) has led some Marxist theorists to re-assess the place of Engels' work Dialectics of Nature in the Marxist canon. They note that Marx preferred the term "historical materialism", which limits his method within a specifically human, sociological context, distinguishing it from what follows here.

While dialectical materialism has been traditionally associated almost exclusively with Marxism, the philosophy is applicable to a contemporary worldview as well. There is nothing in either the concept of dialectic as elabourated by Hegel or in materialism itself which requires Marxism. However, because Marxism is essentially free of traditional theological influences, it is particularly well-suited to dialectical materialism, and a comparable political system based on the philosophy has not yet emerged.

Dialectics was the key idea in Hegelian philosophy, though Engels credited Heraclitus with its origins when he held that "Everything is and is not, for everything is fluid, is constantly changing, constantly coming into being and passing away. All is flux and nothing stays still. Nothing endures but change." It was Hegel who offered a systematic exposition of the concept. In Hegelian philosophy, dialectics applied to the process, evolution and development of history. Hegel viewed history as the progressive manifestation of human reason, and the development of a historical spirit. History recorded increasing awareness and greater rationality as exhibited in human affairs. Human consciousness and freedom expanded as a result of conflicting intellectual forces, which were constantly under tension. Hegel believed in a movement from a rudimentary state of affairs to a perfect form.

The process of history, for Hegel, was marked by two kinds of causation : (*a*) *the individual spirit* which desired happiness and provided energy, and (*b*) *the world spirit* which strived for higher

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freedom, that came with the knowledge of the self. He emphatically believed that without each individual pursuing his own goal(s), whatever they might be, nothing was achieved in history. But to know whether these actions were in conformity with the dialectic of the universal, "the cunning of reason" played its role by allowing passions to run their full course.

Marx agreed with Hegel that there was a constant movement in the dialectical process, but emphasized the real rather than the *ideal*, the *social* rather than the *intellectual*, *matter* rather than the *mind*. For Marx, the key idea was not the history of philosophy, but the history of economic production and the social relations that accompanied it. He acknowledged Hegel's great contribution, which was to recognize world history as a process, as constant motion, change, transformation, and development, and to understand the internal connections between the movement and its development. From Hegel, he also learnt that the various angles of the developmental process could not be studied in isolation, but in their relations with one another and with the process as a whole- Hegel applied dialectics to the realm of ideas. However, Marx as a materialist believed that consciousness was determined by life, and not the other way around. Unlike the latent conservatism and idealism of Hegelian philosophy, Marxism rejected the status quo—capitalism—as intolerable. Social circumstances constantly changed, with no social system lasting forever.

Capitalism arose under certain historical circumstances, which would disappear in due course of time. Thus Marx, like Hegel, continued to believe that dialectics was a powerful tool. It offered a law of social development, and in that sense Marx's social philosophy (like that of Hegel) was a philosophy of history. Both perceived social change as inevitable.

Materialism: In essence, materialism answers the fundamental question of philosophy by asserting the primacy of the material world: in short, matter precedes thought.

Materialism holds that the world is material, that all phenomena in the universe consist of matter in motion, wherein all things are interdependent and interconnected and develop in accordance with natural law, that the world exists outside us and independently of our perception of it, that and that the world is in principle knowable. The ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought. **—Karl Marx**

Dialectics: Dialectics is the science of the most general laws of development of nature, society, and thought. Its principal features are as follows:

1. The universe is not an accidental mix of things isolated from each other, but an integral whole, wherein things are mutually interdependent.
2. Nature is in a state of constant motion: All nature, from the smallest thing to the biggest, from a grain of sand to the sun, from the protista to man, is in a constant state of coming into being and going out of beings, in a constant flux, in a ceaseless state of movement and change.

   —Friedrich Engels, Dialectics of Nature
3. Development is a process whereby insignificant and impreceptible quantitative changes lead to fundamental, qualitative changes. The latter occur not gradually, but rapidly and abruptly, in the form of a leap from one state to another.

   Merely quantitative differences beyond a certain point pass into qualitative changes.

   —Karl Marx
4. All things contain within themselves internal contradictions, which are the primary cause of motion, change, development in the world.

Laws of dialectics: The three laws of dialectics are:

1. The law of the unity and conflict of opposites;
2. Thelaw of the passage of quantitative changes into qualitative changes;
3. The law of the negation of the negation.

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11.5 Materialism and History

Marx's theory, which he called "historical materialism" or the "materialist conception of history" is based on Hegel's claim that history occurs through a dialectic, or clash, of opposing forces. Hegel was a philosophical idealist who believed that we live in a world of appearances, and true reality is an ideal. Marx accepted this notion of the dialectic, but rejected Hegel's idealism because he did not accept that the material world hides from us the "real" world of the ideal; on the contrary, he thought that historically and socially specific ideologies prevented people from seeing the material conditions of their lives clearly.

Marx applied his dialectical method to the material or social world that consisted of economic production and exchange. A study of the productive process explained all other historical phenomena. Marx noted that each generation inherited a mass of productive forces, an accumulation of capital, and a set of social relations which reflected these productive forces. The new generation modified these forces, but at the same time these forces prescribed certain forms of life, and shaped human character and thought in distinct ways. The mode of production and exchange was the final cause of all social changes and political revolutions, which meant that for minds or thoughts to change, society would have to change. Marx considered matter as being active, capable of changing from within. It was not passive, needing an external stimulus for change, a conception found in Hobbes.

> Our conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real processes of production, starting out from the simple material production of life, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this (i.e. civil society in its various stages), as the basis of all history; further, to show it in its action as state, and so, from this starting point, to explain the whole mass of different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics, etc., and trace their origins and growth.

While Hegel viewed national cultures as the driving force of history, for Marx it was the social classes whose antagonism supplied the motive power for change. Both regarded the historical course as a rational necessity consisting of a pattern of stages, with each stage representing a step towards the predetermined goal. Both appealed to an emotion above self-interest : in the case of Hegel it was national pride; for Marx the loyalty among workers for a better future. Marx was initially enthused by Darwin's *Origin of Species*, but subsequently dismissed it as strictly an empirical generalization offering a causal theory of change with no implied idea of progress. Hegelian dialectics, on the contrary, offered a law with a definite beginning and an end, "a condition towards which society is progressing, a condition of complete harmony and integration in which man will discover his time fulfilled nature".

Marx attacked the formidable Hegelian philosophy from within with the help of the writings of Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach.

Feuerbach, in *The Essence of Christianity* (1843), rejected the theory that subject and object condition influenced each other, declaring that comprehension of things was primarily sensual and passive, and only secondarily active and conceptual. As a result, he saw religion as the basis of all social evils. The more an individual enriched the concept of God, the more he impoverished the self. In his later works, Feuerbach went beyond the criticism of religion, subjecting Hegelian philosophy to a critical analysis. Hegel viewed the mind as the moving force of history, and humans as its manifestations. This, according to Feuerbach, located the essence of humanity *outside* human beings, and thus, like religion, served to alienate humanity from itself. He emphatically insisted that philosophy had to begin with the finite and the material world; thought did not precede existence, it was existence that preceded thought. In Feuerbach's philosophy, it was neither God nor thought, but the individual who was the focus.

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The atheistic bent of Marx was reinforced by Feuerbach's humanistic critique of Hegelian dialectics, enabling him to move away from idealism towards materialism. Using Feuerbach's transformative method, Marx criticized Hegel for inverting the relationship between the predicate and the subject. The individual, in Hegel's philosophy, instead of remaining a real subject was turned into a predicate of universal substance. Marx pointed out that belief in God derived from attributing human virtues to an illusory subject, rather than to the human being. Just as religion did not make people, similarly a constitution did not shape people. On the contrary, both religion and constitution were made by the people. By this logic, the material world could be *transformed*, rather than just being *understood*. The task of philosophy was to be critical, and participate in that transformation. As he observed in the eleventh *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845) "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however is to change it".

Marx criticized Feuerbach for reducing religion to its secular origins, without offering an explanation of the duality in human existence. He rejected Feuerbach's materialism as passive, for objects were seen in a contemplative way rather than as "sensuous, practical human activity". Since materialists like Feuerbach failed to offer an effective cure, idealism developed the active side of matter in an abstract way. The mind could be freed from mystification only if the negativities of social life were removed through practical action. Hence Marx began with the conception of socialized humanity, rather than the civil society of old materialism. He replaced God with money in *On The Jewish Question* (1848).

> Money is the universal, self contained value of all things. Hence it has robbed the whole world, the human world as well as nature, of its proper value. Money is the alienate essence of man's labour and life, and this alien essence dominated him as he worships it.

From a materialist perspective, Marx analyzed the economic mode of production the way people actually lived and engaged in production. In the *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels wrote :

> We must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence, and therefore of all history, the premise namely that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to "make history". But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life.

Marx, in his analysis of history, mentioned the important role of ideology in perpetuating false consciousness among people, and demarcated the stages which were necessary for reaching the goal of Communism. In that sense, both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were performing their historically destined roles. In spite of the deterministic interpretation of history, the individual had to play a very important role within the historical limits of his time, and actively hasten the process.

Marx was a revolutionary with a belief in the philosophy of praxis. Implicit in his belief was an underlying assumption of a law operating all the time which led to Engels' formulation of the dialectics of nature. This alteration changed the very essence of Marx's method of arriving at a conclusion from a particular event or a happening, to a general theory or framework determining even the small happenings.

Marx had a very powerful moral content in his analysis, and asserted that progress was not merely inevitable, but would usher in a perfect society free of alienation, exploitation and deprivation. His materialistic conception of history emphasized the practical side of human activity, rather than speculative thought as the moving force of history. In the famous funeral oration speech, Engels claimed that Marx made two major discoveries—the law of development of human history and the law of capitalist development.

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11.6 Economic Determinism

Marx and Engels developed the materialistic conception of history to explain the law of human development. Engels specifically linked the enterprise to Darwin's theory of evolution. The underlying assumption of the materialistic conception was the role played by economic factors, which formed the base. Everything else belonged to the superstructure, which consisted of the state, the law, government, art, culture and philosophy. Like Hegel, Marx saw history as progressing towards a definitive and inevitable goal. In the sequence of world history, England represented the "unconscious tool of history".

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Political Economy regards the proletarian ... like a horse, he must receive enough to enable him to work . It does not consider him, during the time when he is not working as a human being. **—Marx**

> Our conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real processes of production, starting out from the simple material production of life, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this (i.e., civil society in its various stages), as the basis of all history; further, to show it in its action as state, and so, from this starting point to explain the whole mass of different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics, etc., and trace their origins and growth.

Marx regarded the mode of production as the economic base, the real foundation of society. The mode of production consisted of the means or techniques of production, and the relationships that people entered into with one another for production of goods and services. The economic base conditioned and determined the superstructure. Writing in the *German Ideology*, he observed : "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their existence".

When the economic basis of society changed, there was a change in consciousness. Changes within the economic base brought about consequent changes within the superstructure. Marx observed :

> At a certain stage of their development the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetter. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed .

Marx's materialism referred not only to matter, but also to economic and social relations. He said the material forces of production came into conflict with the relations of production, but did not explain the nature of that conflict, other than alluding to the fact that it could be a moral one. It was moral, for it desired to create a humane and decent society free of exploitation, domination and oppression.

Marx identified five stages of economic development known to history. These were Primitive Communism, Slavery, Feudalism, Capitalism, and Communism. In each of these stages (except for the final one), there were forces of contradiction which made revolutions inevitable. The given status quo would be the thesis with conflict(s) symptomatic of an antithesis, and a solution in the

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form of a synthesis. The synthesis in turn would become the thesis, and the process continued till a perfect society was attained.

For Marx and Engels, it was not enough to understand the general processes of history, but also the way these processes worked themselves out in the present. If one desired to transform the world, then a correct diagnosis of the prevailing social conditions was necessary. In the nineteenth century, this meant an understanding of the working of bourgeois society, a study of the sociology of capitalism. Capitalism created unavoidable suffering, which ought to be replaced first by Socialism and then Communism.

Self-Assessment

Choose the correct options

1. The term dialectical materialism was coined in ..... .
   (*i*) 1887 (*ii*) 1885 (*iii*) 1880 (*iv*) 1886
2. Karl Marx was a ..... Philosopher.
   (*i*) Greece (*ii*) German (*iii*) Italian (*iv*) None of these
3. Marx was born on ..... .
   (*i*) 5th May 1818 (*ii*) 5th May 1819 (*iii*) 8th May 1815 (*iv*) 5th May 1816
4. The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts was written by Marx in ..... .
   (*i*) 1844 (*ii*) 1845 (*iii*) 1850 (*iv*) 1843

11.7 Summary

- Marx wrote in the optimistic environment of Victorian England, where the gloomy predictions of Malthus were forgotten. He was a believer in the uninterrupted progress of human civilization and of industrial society. He did not recognize any limits to growth. He was generally hopeful of the liberating and progressive roles of science and human rationality. For their sheer range and breadth of influence, it would be appropriate to say that one could not write without taking into account his writings, and without understanding the full import of his ideas.
- Marx claimed that he had turned Hegel upside down, and was initiating his own independent line of theorizing. Though he styled his brand of socialism as scientific, his exposition was not systematic and cogent. His observations and descriptions of the Communist ideal lacked the details that were needed to project a blueprint. The general nature of the descriptions meant different things to different people. Unless one clearly and precisely stated the meaning of a just society, it was not possible to debate and reflect on it. Instead, when "men range themselves under the banner as friends and enemies of the 'Revolution', the only important question which is just and useful is kept out of sight and measures are judged not by their real worth but by the analogy they seem to have to an irrelevant abstraction". This failure to give details led to considerable confusion, for the same words conveyed different things to different people. "... Marx sketched but never developed a systematic theory of the state and hence the idea of a political economy remained overdetermined and undescribed politically".
- However, Marx was a revolutionary and a socialist, but above all he was a humanist who believed in genuine emancipation and liberation of human beings. He registered protest against every kind of domination. True, many of his. predictions did not materialize, but Marx's genius lay not merely in his ability to predict, but in the new modes of thinking about economic and political issues.
- The doctrine which has survived and grown, and which has had a greater and more lasting influence both on opinion and on action than any other view put forward in modern times,

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is his theory of the evolution and structure of capitalist Society, of which he nowhere gave a detailed exposition. This theory, by asserting that the important question to be asked with regard to any phenomenon is concerned with the relation which bears to the economic structure ... has created new tools of criticism and research whose use has altered the direction and emphasis of the social sciences in our generation .

- Undoubtedly, Marx was a genius, but one should not overlook his shortcomings. Weber, in his famous essay *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-1905) points out that capitalism was caused by the habits, beliefs and attitudes of Protestantism, and more specifically, Calvinism and English Puritanism. For Weber, ideas and economic motives were interests too, that "material without ideal interests are empty, but ideals without material interests are impotent" . Weber gave importance to concepts and values, for they played a pivotal role in social life.
- According to Weber, Marx remained vague about the economic base. He conceded that within the parameters of non-economic factors, purely economic behaviour would occur. In fact, Marx's simplistic analysis precluded such considerations. Weber was not happy with Marx's clubbing of technology with the economic base, for he believed that with any state of technology, many economic orders were possible and vice versa. He criticized Marx for being imprecise about what really constituted economic categories.
- Weber criticized Socialism for its attempt to replace the anarchy of the market and achieve greater equity through planning. This, he believed, would result in greater bureaucratization, leading to a loss of freedom and entrepreneurship. Weber was clear that private property and markets were necessary for guaranteeing plurality of social powers and individual freedom.
- Marx did not foresee the rise of Fascism, totalitarianism and the welfare state. His analysis of capitalism was, at best, applicable to early nineteenth-century capitalism, though his criticisms of capitalism as being wasteful, unequal and exploitative were true. However, his alternative of genuine democracy and full Communism seemed more difficult to realize in practice, for they did not accommodate a world which was becoming increasingly differentiated, stratified and functionally specialized.
- Popper's (1945) critique of Marxism on the basis of falsification was equally true and difficult to refute, for Marxism constantly adjusted theory in the light of reality. Popper was suspicious of Marx's scientific predictions, for a scientific theory was one that would not try to explain everything. Along with Plato and Hegel, Marx was seen as an enemy of the open society. Marxism claimed to have studied the laws of history, on the basis of which it advocated total, sweeping and radical changes. Not only was it impossible to have first-hand knowledge based on some set of laws that governed society and human individuals, but Popper also rejected Marx's social engineering as dangerous, for it treated individuals as subservient to the interests of the whole. Popper rejected the historicism, holism and Utopian social engineering of Marxism. In contrast, he advocated piecemeal social engineering, where change would be gradual and modest, allowing rectification of lapses and errors, for it was not possible to conceive of everything. This method also encouraged public discourse and participation, making the process democratic and majoritarian.
- Popper claimed that Marx's scientific socialism was wrong'' not only about society, but also about science. The capitalism that Marx described never existed. Marx made the economy all-important, ignoring factors like religion, nationality, friendship. Society was far more complex than what Marx described. In spite of exaggerating the influence of economics, it was a fact that "Marx brought into the social sciences and historical science the very important idea that economic conditions are of great importance in the life of society ... . There was nothing like serious economic history before Marx".

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- Comforth, in *The Open Philosophy and the Open Enemies* (1968), charged Popper for regarding capitalism and the open society as coextensive, and for believing that capitalism had changed fundamentally. For him, "friends of the open society, who are organizing to get rid of capitalism, are its enemies; and the enemies of the open society, who are organizing to preserve capitalism as its friends". The fight for an open society, in reality, was a fight against anything and everything that was done to prevent exploitation of man by man. He did not accept the charge that Communism would destroy individual freedom, reinforce dogmatism, and undermine science, the arts, culture, and eventually civilization. Communism did not stand for lawless tyranny and violence.
- Cornforth's defence of Marxism against Popper was merely polemical, without much substance. He ignored the fact that unlike many other well-known critics, Popper did not attack totalitarian Marxism at its weakest but at its strongest, which led Berlin to acclaim that Popper provided the "most scrupulous and formidable criticism of the philosophical and historical doctrines of Marxism by any living writer" To this, Magee observed, "I must confess I do not see how any rational man can have read Popper's critique of Marx and still be a Marxist".
- Berlin rejected the deterministic outlook of Marxism, and questioned the entire argument of providing the right goal for all individuals. Instead the focus was on *today*, rather than chase chimerical Utopias of *tomorrow*. The idea of Utopia for Berlin, like Popper, was philosophically dubious, hideously dangerous and logically incoherent. Both ruled out finality in anything. While, for Berlin, a Utopian society meant lack of free choice and Monist values, namely one idea of good life, for Popper, a blueprint of a perfect ideal meant statism and arrested growth. It precluded what he called "unplanned planning".
- Like Popper, Berlin attacked the historicism of Hegel and Marx, which he developed in his essay, *Historical Inevitability* (1954). Many of Berlin's arguments were similar to those of Popper, except that Berlin was emphatic that the historicism of Hegel and Marx denied free human will which enabled them to absolve historians from censuring the villains in history. Historicism was some kind of metaphysical mystery. Both Hegel and Marx defined freedom as obedience to a rational will, namely the idea of positive liberty, rather than seeing freedom as choice, as reflected in the writings of Locke, Hume and J.S. Mill. Choice implied conflict among rival goods, whereas rational will suggested one way of life, one life plan that would be the same for most, if not all the people.
- Berlin's inherent faith in pluralism led him to defend freedom as choice or negative liberty for each individual, each culture and each nation. Each historical period had its own goals, aspirations and conceptions of good life, and it was impossible to unite them into an overarching, single, theoretical system in which all ends would be realized without any clashes and conflicts. For Berlin, values, however ultimate they may be, did and could exclude one another, and their incompatibility had to be reconciled through a constant process of compromise and trade-offs instead of a false synthesis. Thus, Berlin was a critic of Enlightenment rationalism, which suggested the uninterrupted progress of history and the possibility of synthesizing all values. The master idea for Berlin was pluralism, which suggested that there was no single master idea, meaning that there were many conceptions of good life, a good society, and that these goods were often, at least sometimes, incommensurable and incompatible. A Monist was compared to a hedgehog, who knew one Grand Idea. Marx, Hegel and Plato were hedgehogs. A pluralist knew many things, like a fox.
- Rejecting Monism, Berlin attacked the metaphysical content behind positive liberty, that everything could be explained with reference to a single homogeneous principle and

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discoverable laws. This led to determinism and totalitarianism. He insisted that philosophy had to be humble. It could not offer a set of principles or a theory that would solve all the dilemmas of moral and political life, nor could it straighten the "crooked timber of humanity", a favourite phrase with him, which he borrowed from Kant. He was opposed to philosophy proposing radical social reforms, which explained his hostility towards Marxism. For Berlin, totalitarian ideologies and politics—Fascism, Nazism and Communism— did have different goals between them to pursue, but they shared certain common traits. They viewed the state as being superior to the individual, giving it an overarching role over society and individuals. It directed every aspect of the individual's life, suggesting homogeneity and regarding any deviation as sacrilegious.

- Habermas (1991) rejected specifically the nostalgic, romantic and Utopian vision of Socialism, though he remained a committed socialist. He was clear that Socialism would not rise again, but that it was still alive, as a critique. He considered Socialism as a "discourse in exile". He examined Marx's theory of history by focusing on the relationship between crisis and critique, and then on the concepts of reification and alienation. First, Habermas raised doubts about Marx's Hegelian-inspired concept of labour as a human being's self-creative activity. Individuals learnt to control the natural world and acquire technical knowledge, but it was social interaction that established human capacity, namely the development of moral cognitive abilities. This, according to Habermas, could not be explained by the increase in productive forces, implying that class conflict was no longer a motive in history. By focusing on production, Marx failed to see the possibilities for freedom in the realm of social interaction. He mistook command of the external nature of human freedom, and ignored social repression of internal nature. Second, Habermas pointed out that societies were totalities, whose parts were in the end determined by the level of development of their productive forces. He distinguished between life-world and system, which in turn were divided into the private and public spheres. The life-world was the realm of moral-practical knowledge or relations that existed within the families and workplaces (the private), and political actions and opinions (the public). It was coordinated through communicative actions, namely actions involving the self and those of others. In comparison, political (states) and economic (markets) systems were coordinated through the modicum of power and money. Habermas argued that Marx failed to see these distinctions, which was why he could not foresee the stability of capitalism or the bankruptcy of Socialism. Third, Marx defined history as progress, rather than the development of universal principles of morality and justice. Though these did not represent the unfolding of reason in history, "Historicizing the knowledge of an essence ... only replaces the teleology of Being with that of History. The secretly normative presuppositions of theories of history are naturalized in the form of evolutionary concepts of progress".
- Habermas pointed out that moral cognitive developments logically created a space for new forms of social organizations, and that fundamental changes occurred when society demonstrated the capacity to adapt and grow. These changes indicated the meaning of freedom, and were defined by the participants themselves. Only with a convergence of knowing and doing, and the self-conscious creation of a socialist society could put an end to human exile. The specific function of critical theory was to identify the formal conditions that made this emancipation possible. Habermas maintained that by visualizing humans as producers, societies as totalities, and history as progress, Marx went back to a Hegelian-inspired theology and anthropology.
- According to Habermas, state socialism became bankrupt, but Socialism still nurtured "the hope that humanity can emancipate itself from self-imposed tutelage". It remained a "doctrine in exile", for it nourished the possibility, according to Fischman, that "people can be more human than their society permits".

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Anthony Giddens observed: "In many respects Marx's writings exemplify features of nineteenth-century thought which are plainly defective when looked at from the perspectives of our century", and concluded that "Marx's materialist conception of history should be discarded once and for all". He pointed out that Marx's greatest failure was the theory of nationalism for Marx was an archetypal modernist. He distinguished between nationalism (symbols and beliefs) and the nation state (the administrative set-up), which were two separate entities, though sometimes they converged. Nationalism was a primordial sentiment "found in tribal and traditional societies", while the nation state was a modern "power container of time and space". Capitalism needed the nation state, and as a power structure, promoted the aims of capitalism.

- The collapse of Communism proved the serious shortcomings of Marxism, both in theory and practice. It, at best, remained a critique rather than providing a serious alternative to liberal democracy (Harrington cited in Heilbroner 1989: 10). The Soviet experiment, despite its many failings, kept alive the possibility that there was an alternative to capitalism. Its collapse and furthermore the shrinking of the industrial working class and the weakening of the labour movement have underlined the irrelevance of Marxism as a political practice, environmentalism and post-Modernism challenged some of the fundamental assumptions about progress and knowledge that underpinned Marxism .

11.8 Key–Words

1. Hegelianism : It is a collective term for schools of thought following or referring to Hegel's Philosophy which can be as the rational alone is real, which means that all reality is people of being expressed in rational categories.
2. An-sich : In itself.
3. Anderssein : Out of itself.

Answers- Self Assessment

1. (*i*) 2. (*ii*) 3. (*i*) 4. (*i*)

11.9 Review Questions

1. What do you mean by Marx's doctoral dissertation?
2. Disscuss Marx's dialectics.
3. What is materiaclism? Explain.
4. Write a short note on Marx as a poet.

11.10 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Unit 12: Karl Marx: Class Struggle and Social Change and Theory of Surplus Value

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Objectives

After studying this unit Students will be able to

- Discuss Marx's class struggle ans social.
- Understand Assessment of Marx predictions.
- Explain theory of surplus value.

Introduction

Which remained unpublished until the 1930s. In the Manuscripts, Marx outlined a humanist conception of communism, influenced by the philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach and based on a contrast between the alienated nature of labour under capitalism and a communist society in which human beings freely developed their nature in cooperative production. It was also in Paris that Marx developed his lifelong partnership with Friedrich Engels (1820–1895).

Karl Marx was born and educated in Prussia, where he fell under the influence of Ludwig Feuerbach and other radical Hegelians. Although he shared Hegel's belief in dialectical structure and historical inevitability. Marx held that the foundations of reality lay in the material base of economics rather than in the abstract thought of idealistic philosophy. He earned a doctorate at Jena in 1841 writing on the materialism and atheism of Greek atomists, then moved to Koln, where he founded and edited a radical newspaper, Rheinische Zeitung. Although he also attempted to earn a living as a journalist in Paris Brussels, Marx's participation in unpopular political movements made it difficult to support his growing family. He finally settled in London in 1849, where he lived in poverty

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while studying and developing his economic and political theories. Above all else, Marx believed that philosophy ought to be employed in practice to change the world. The core of Marx's economic analysis found erly expression in the Okonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844 (Economic and Political Manuscripts of 1844) (1844). There, Marx argued that the conditions of modern industrial societies invariably result in the estrangement (or alienation) of workers from their own labour. In his review of a Bruno Baier book, *On the Jewish Question* (1844), Marx decried the lingering influence of religion over politics and proposed a revolutionary re-structuring of European society. Much later, Marx undertook a systematic explanation of his economic theories in *Das Kapital* (Capital) (1867–95) and theory of surplus (1862). Marx and his colleague Friendrich Engels issued the Manifest der kommunistischen Partei (Communist Manifesto) (1848) in the explicit hope of precipitating social revolution. This work describes the class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie, distinguishes communism from other socialist movements, proposes a list of specific social reforms, and urges all workers to unite in revolution against existing regimes.

In 1844 Marx wrote *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. In this work he developed his ideas on the concept of alienation. Marx identified three kinds of alienation in capitalist society. First, the worker is alienated from what he produces. Second, the worker is alienated from himself; only when he is not working does he feel truly himself. Finally, in capitalist society people are alienated from each other; that is, in a competitive society people are set against other people. Marx believed the solution to this problem was communism as this would enable the fulfilmentof "his potentialities as a humna."

Marx's concept of alienation is based on his analysis of alienated labour. Through political economy, he sees that the worker is degraded to the most miserable commodity, *i.e.*, the misery of the workers increases with the power and size of their production. Marx depicts political economy as the following:

The workers becomes poorer the more wealth he produces and the more his production increases inpower and extent. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more goods he creates. The devaluation of the human world increases in direct relation with the increase in value of the world of things. Labour does not only create goods; it also produces itself and the worker as a commodity and indeed in the same proportion as it produces goods.

12.1 Class Struggle and Social Change

Marx articulated the idea of human liberation distinct from political emancipation. The aim of human liberation was to bring forth the collective, generic character of human life which was real, so that society would have to assume a collective character and coincide with the life of the state. This would be possible if individuals were freed from religion and private property. The proletariat, by being the universal class in chains, would liberate itself and human society. Relations of production in reality were class relations. Class antagonisms were crucial to the workings of all societies, as Marx observed that, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles".

In every society there were two classes, the rich and the poor, one that owned the means of production, and the other that sold its labour. During different historical phases, these two classes were known by different names and enjoyed different legal statuses and privileges, but one thing was common, that in the course of all these phases, their relationship had been one of exploitation and domination. Marx wrote: "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another".

Marx objected to the idea of the middle-class historians that class struggle had ended with the rise of the bourgeoisie, just as he opposed the perceptions of the Classical economists that capitalism

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was eternal and immutable. He harnessed the rising consciousness and power among the industrial proletariat, and emphasized that it was their desire to bring about economic equality that kept class struggle and revolutionary change alive. He summed up his own contributions to the notion of class struggle in a letter to Josef Weydemeyer in 1852, wherein he confidently declared that class struggles would not be a permanent feature of society, but were necessitated by the historical development of production. Class struggle would end with the destruction of capitalism, for Communism would be a classless society.

Class, for Marx, symbolized collective unity in the same manner as the nation in Hegel's theory. Each class produced its own ideas and beliefs, and operated within a particular economic and social system. The individual was important with respect to his membership within a class, which determined his moral convictions, aesthetic preferences and every kind of reasoning.

For Marx, ideology played a pivotal role in controlling the oppressed. There were three main features of ideas. First, they depicted the existing order as entrenched in forces that were beyond human control. Things were not arbitrary, but instituted by certain sections of people for their own benefit. Second, ideas explained how the existing order benefited everyone in society. Third, ideas depicted the existing order as beneficial in a particular way, namely to promote the interests of the dominant economic class and protect class privileges. The actual reality was hidden, which Marx described as "false consciousness".

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas : i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationship which make the one class the ruling one, therefore the ideas of its dominance.

Ideology, along with economic determinism and class struggle, provided the strategic guide to the working class in its efforts to bring about a social revolution.

12.2 Analysis of Capitalism

Marx defined capitalism by two factors, first, by the use of wage labour. In the *Capital*, he pointed out that "capitalism arises only when the owners of the means of production and subsistence meet in the market with the free labourer selling his labour power". The basis of capitalism was wage labour. The second defining characteristic of capitalism was private ownership of the means of production, which was distinct from personal property, like household effects and home. The ownership of the means of production was the crucial feature of capitalism, for it was restricted to a few. Those who did not own anything were forced to sell their labour power and became wage earners. The idea that labour was only the property of the poor was derived from William Cobbett (1763-1835). Unlike the medieval guildsmen, they did not work for themselves but for others. Marx observed :

> The man who possesses no other property than his labour power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men, who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour. He can work only with their permission, hence live only with their permission .

In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875), Marx implied that even if the state owned the means of production, wage labour would still continue. This was not real Socialism, but a new variation of capitalism, namely state capitalism. Many critics often argued that the former Soviet Union was not a true Socialist state, but a tyrannous form of state capitalism.

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In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx paid handsome tributes to the bourgeoisie, while highlighting its negative side. There were three reasons that made capitalism attractive. First, it brought remarkable economic progress by revolutionizing the means of production and developing technology as never before. It built and encouraged the growth of commerce and factories on a scale unknown before. It instituted cooperative social production. Writing about the role of the bourgeoisie, Marx observed :

> The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive force than have all preceding generations together. Subjections of Nature's force to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground— what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour ?
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> It had accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former exoduses of nations and crusades.

By the very range and extent of its activity, capitalism made its second contribution. It undermined national barriers. In its search for markets and raw materials, capitalism and the bourgeoisie crossed national boundaries and penetrated every corner of the world, drawing the most backward nations into their fold. Capitalism was cosmopolitan and international.

Being worldwide, the third achievement of capitalism was within its territorial confines. It eliminated the distinction between the town and country, and enabled the peasants to come out of what Marx called "the idiocy of rural life". In summation, capitalism revolutionized the techniques of economic production, reduced international barriers and created an urban civilization. In spite of these achievements, Marx contended that capitalism had outlived its use because of the sufferings and hardships it caused. It would have to yield itself to a new socialist organization of production.

Marx examined the sufferings within capitalism, which were rooted in its origin: the eviction of peasants from their land, the loss of their sources of income, their vagabondage, their assembling in cities where they had become dependent on starvation wages, and, most significantly, the creation of the proletariat.

> The historical movement which changes the producers into wage-workers appears, on the one hand, as their emancipation from serfdom and from the fetters of the guilds, and this side alone exists for our bourgeois historians. But, on the other hand, these new freemen became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production, and of all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements. And the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.

The suffering required for the creation of the free-wage labourer was the first cost of capitalism. The exploitation of the proletariat could be measured with the help of surplus value—the difference between the wages paid to the labourer, and the final price for which the product was sold. The rate of profit indicated the degree of exploitation. The capitalist squeezed the working class like a sponge to extract the last drop of profit. Exploitation, therefore, was the second disadvantage of capitalism.

The third was the alienation of the worker. To Marx, labour had to be satisfying and fulfilling, which was not possible under capitalism. The reason was the lack of control the worker had over the productive process. The worker had no voice to decide when, how and where to work, but merely obeyed the boss' commands. Division of labour and specialization of skills had made the worker a specialist, preventing the full development of all his talents, thereby stifling his potential.

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A labourer had no control over the final product of his labour. The nature of the productive process divided workers and set them against one another; they no longer conceived of their work as a great, collective, human project. Moreover, human beings lost the ability to see their own products for what they were, and were willing to be enslaved by them. This was what Marx meant by commodity fetishism. All this criticism rested on an implicit Utopian premise, that individuals were fully human only when they developed and expressed their potential through satisfying labour. Linked with this premise was the second remarkable assumption, that the modern industrial system afforded opportunities for all to engage in rewarding labour. In the socialist Utopia, division of labour would be abolished ending alienation and monotony.

The early Liberals were confident that economic inequality could be obviated with constant growth, which would percolate downwards and raise the standards of living. Marx, however, pointed out that the gulf between the rich and poor forever widened. Capitalism encouraged inequality and consumerism. Commodities assumed personalities of their own. Poverty and affluence were relative categories, for human needs were by and large social in nature.

> A house may be large or small; as long as the surrounding houses are equally small it satisfies all social demands for a dwelling. But let a palace arise beside the little house, and it shrinks from a little house to a hut... however high it may shoot up in the course of civilization, if the neighbouring palace grows to an equal or even greater extent, the occupant of the relatively small house will feel more and more uncomfortable, dissatisfied and cramped within its four walls.

To Marx, exploitation and alienation made possible the revolutionary transformation of capitalism. It was the individual as a producer who rebelled against society to free himself from exploitation and oppression. The basis for change was therefore moral. Unless private property was abolished, the worker could not be truly free. But once this was achieved, human nature would undergo a transformation, for a true Communist society was one of socialized humanity.

Capitalism divided society into two hostile camps. The proletariat grew larger and larger, with their miseries and pauperization attenuated, while the bourgeoisie would become numerically small, prosperous and well-off. With wages pushed low, small entrepreneurs were forced to join the working class or merge with giant monopolies. The ever-increasing appetite of the capitalist class led to an ever-increasing demand for markets, raw materials and profits, representing a crisis within capitalism. Marx argued that the increase in productivity did not benefit the worker, who only received *exchange*, and not *use value*. The surplus value was appropriated by the capitalist. With polarization of society, class struggles became sharper, making a revolution on a world scale inevitable. Marx conceived of a worldwide transformation, for capitalism was truly international and global in impact.

Marx asserted that capitalism contained within itself seeds of its own destruction. He rallied the working class under the call "Workers of all countries unite", a phrase that he borrowed from Karl Schapper. Within capitalism, increase in monopolies led to growing exploitation, misery and pauperization of the working class. Simultaneously, as the working class increased in number, it became better organized and acquired greater bargaining skills. This initiated a revolutionary process, leading to a new socialist arrangement in which common possession replaced private ownership of the means of production. The clarion call given to the workers was to unite, shed their chains and conquer the world. In fact, it was "Marx's journalistic eye for the short, pithy sentence which ... saved his entire philosophy from oblivion ...".

Subsequently, in 1895 Engels questioned the efficacy of revolutionary insurrection of society by the proletariat, for he observed that "history has proved us, and all who thought like us, wrong ... has also completely transformed the conditions under which the proletariat has to fight. The mode of struggle of 1848 is today obsolete in every respect". This observation by Engels set the tone for Revisionism led by Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932) (Elliot 1967).

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12.3 Assessment of Marx's Predictions

Marx's analysis of capitalism led him to predict the following :

1. The income gap between the capitalists and the workers would increase. More and more independent producers would be forced down into the proletariat, leaving a few rich capitalists and a mass of poor workers.
2. Workers' wages, with short-lived expectations, would remain at a subsistence level.
3. The rate of profit would fall.
4. Capitalism would collapse because of its internal contradictions.
5. Proletarian revolutions would occur in the most industrially advanced countries.

Many (nearly all) of these predictions, did not come true as Marx failed to take into account the changes within capitalism. He did not anticipate or comprehend its tremendous resilience. By the late nineteenth century, capitalism stabilized itself. Historical developments did not validate many of Marx's observations, which became increasingly obsolete in the twentieth century. Besides these, there was a basic error in the model which was that he failed to take cognizance of the fact that "a hatred of capitalism need not lead to socialism" (as it could) "take other political directions". The operationalization of democracy, extensive social security cover and labour welfare laws had improved the working conditions and the position of the working class. "The proletarian class no longer exists in its previous stage. Workers have rights in developed countries, they are proprietors".

In the 1890s, Bernstein rightly perceived that many of the Marxist predictions became obsolete. He pointed out that the peasantry and the middle classes were not disappearing. Small business organizations did not get eliminated, and the industrial working class was not becoming the overwhelming majority of the population. Instead, the substantial portion of the population was neither bourgeois nor proletarian. Rather, the middle class was on the increase. Among the members of the working class, the rapid growth in membership and votes for social democratic parties did not necessarily indicate any desire for Socialism. The workers voted and joined social democrats for many reasons other than purely a commitment for Socialism. Bernstein also questioned the capacity of the working class to assume control of the means of production.

Taking a cue from Webb, who had pointed out that the poor performance of the cooperative was because of its democratic character on the one hand, and the need for functional differentiation and hierarchy of authority on the other hand, Bernstein asserted the impossibility of the idea of the manager being "the employee of those he manages, that he should be dependent for his position on their favour and their bad temper". Based on these observations, Bernstein pointed to the lack of revolutionary ardour among the workers. Instead of analyzing the economic and political implications of Revisionism, Vladimir Illyich Ulyanov Lenin (1870-1924) reiterated and supported the Marxist critique of capitalism, which had lost its relevance by the end of the nineteenth century, and more so by the beginning of the twentieth.

It would be tempting to denigrate the degeneration of the Marxist doctrine because the revolution that Marx predicted occurred in a relatively backward country in Europe, with no prior tradition of democracy. But it was equally true that there were no possibilities of a real Marxist revolution in any of the advanced industrial democratic regions of Europe. "Marx's economics has been characterized as a reaction to the specific evils of the nineteenth century of capitalism".

12.4 Analysis of the State

Marx critically dissected the Hegelian theory of the modern state and its institutions in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843). Hegel's separation o f civil society and the state was only relevant in his perception of a particular historical context. The state was not eternal. It would eventually disappear. Marx was also critical of Hegel's analysis of the state. The state was not, as

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Hegel described, a "march of God on earth", but an instrument of the dominant economic class exploiting and oppressing the other sections of society. Marx rejected the dichotomy between civil society and the state in Hegelian philosophy, and concluded that the state and bureaucracy did not represent universal interests.

Marx regarded the state, regardless of the forms of government, as an evil, because it was a product of a society saddled with irreconcilable class struggles. It belonged to the realm of the superstructure, as it was conditioned and determined by its economic base. In the course of history, each mode of production would give rise to its own specific political organization, which would further the interests of the economically dominant class. In a capitalist society, the state, as defined in the *Manifesto*, was "the executive committee of the bourgeoisie".

Unlike Hegel, who had worked out the details of a modern state by his distinction of the realm of the state and the realm of civil society, Marx's account was sketchy. This was in spite of Marx's professed aim to provide for an alternative to the Hegelian paradigm as outlined in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. The alternative that Marx envisaged was a classless, stateless society of true democracy and full communism, in which the political state disappeared.

For Marx and Engels, the state expressed human alienation. It was an instrument of class exploitation and class oppression, for the economically dominant class exploited and oppressed the economically weaker class. The state apparatus served the ruling class, but acquired independence and became autonomous when the adversary classes were in a state of temporary equilibrium. This phenomenon was described as Bonapartism. In such a situation, the dictator, with the support of the state apparatus, became its guardian.

In the *Anti Duhring* (1878), Engels regarded the state as an unnatural institution arising when society was divided into "two irreconcilable and antagonistic classes". In such a situation, a state could not be democratic, for *a true democratic society would have to be both classless and stateless*. The instruments of the state, like law, government, police and bureaucracy, served the interests of the dominant economic class, and not the whole of society as contended by the liberals.

Bonapartism

In the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Marx denounced the bureaucratic and all-powerful state advising the proletariat to destroy it. His views on the state were determined largely by his perceptions and analyses of the French state, the Revolution of 1848 and the *coup d'etat* of Napoleon III. As a result, Marx advocated a violent revolutionary seizure of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, in countries with democratic institutions, the transition from capitalism to socialism could be peaceful. In 1872, Marx noted such a possibility in America, England and Holland, where the state was not as highly centralized and bureaucratic as in France.

In the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx and Engels referred to Bonapartism as a regime in a capitalist society in which the executive branch of the state, under the rule of one individual, attained dictatorial power over all other parts of the state and society. Bonapartism was an extreme manifestation of what, in recent Marxist writings, was described as relative autonomy of the state. An example of such a regime during Marx's lifetime was that of Louis Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon I, who became Napoleon III after his *coup d'etat* of December 2, 1851. Engels found a parallel with Bismarck's rule in Germany.

Bonapartism was the result of a situation where the ruling class in capitalist society was no longer in a position to maintain its rule through constitutional and parliamentary means. Neither was the working class able to wrest control for itself. It was a situation of temporary equilibrium between the rival warring classes. In the *Civil War in France* (1871), Marx described Bonapartism as a "form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation".

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In the *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), Engels remarked that the state was generally a tool of the ruling class, but there were exceptional times when the warring classes balanced one another, giving it sufficient independence. The independence of a Bonapartist state, and its role as the "ostensible mediator" between the rival classes did not mean that the state was in a position of suspended animation. The Bonapartist state, in reality, ensured the safety and stability of bourgeois society, guaranteeing its rapid development.

In opposition to the German Federalists, in 1848 Marx and Engels contended that a strong centre was a prerequisite of all modern states.

They criticized the Frankfurt Assembly for not creating a sufficiently strong central government, and, conversely, praised the Jacobins during the French Revolution for overriding the powers of the elected local authorities and establishing a centralized administration. Subsequently, Lenin pointed out that the essential difference between the Marxists and the Anarchists was on the question of centralism.

Both Marx and Engels had mixed feelings about parliamentary institutions. Whether the proletarian revolution would be violent or peaceful would depend on the level and maturity of democratic political institutions, but they were categorical that it would be democratic by virtue of being majoritarian. In the light of the severe restrictions on suffrage in their times, they had qualms about whether parliamentary means could act as instruments, or even as catalysts, for profound social and economic changes. Hence, the *Manifesto* stressed the need to introduce democratic institutions once the proletarian revolution was accomplished. The preliminary draft contended that the revolution would "inaugurate a democratic constitution and thereby directly or indirectly the political rule of the proletariat".

Future Society

For Marx and Engels, Communist society eliminated all forms of alienation for the human individual, from nature, from society and from humanity. It did not merely mean consumer satisfaction, but the abolition of all forms of estrangement, the liberation of human forces and enhancement of personal creativity. The institution of private property and division of labour, identified as the source of alienation, would be destroyed as a prerequisite for the new and truly human phase in history. Marx and Engels viewed the proletariat as an agent, and not as a tool in history, and with the liberation of the proletariat came the liberation of society.

The transitional phase, the phase between the destruction of the bourgeois state and the inauguration of a communist society, symbolized by the dictatorship of the proletariat, generated a great deal of controversy in Marxist political theory. Interestingly, one of the well-known Utopias was the least delineated. Marx's cautious predictions were imposed by his own epistemological premises. Any discussion of the future (which was not yet an existing reality) would smack of philosophical idealism for it would amount to the description of an object that existed only in the consciousness of the thinking subject. Moreover, he did not want to rival those Socialists whom he branded as "utopian", by constructing detailed blueprints for a communist society that would be determined by the specific conditions under which it was established.

The crucial fact was that observations on future society were set forth in cautious tones "as a posthumous analysis of the passing of the bourgeois world". Communism, for Marx, "can never be an ideal to which reality must adjust. It is reality that comes into being". This was evident in the' *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. "What we have to deal with here is communist society not as it has developed on its foundations, but on the contrary just as it emerges from capitalist society".

In the *Civil War in France*, similar sentiments were stated. "The working class has no ideals to realize but to set free the elements of the new society with which the old bourgeois society itself is pregnant".

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There were similar observations in the *German Ideology* and the *Paris Manuscripts* (1844). Marx projected an image of future society from the internal tensions of existing capitalist society, implying that, at the outset, Communist society would be perfect, universalizing those elements of bourgeois society that could be universalized.

12.5 Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The controversial and ambiguous concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat emerged in the writings of Marx and Engels as a result of a debate with the German Social Democrats, the Anarchists, and more significantly, from the practical experience of the Paris Commune of 1871. These observations had to be put together from the remarks solely made en passant and from different sources. The two major texts, however, were the *Civil War in France* and the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat held the key to the understanding of Marx's theory on the nature of Communist society and the role of the proletarian state. It was a concept that divided the Marxists and Leninists from the Anarchists on the one hand, and the Social Democrats on the other.

The Communist Manifesto

The phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" was not used in the *Manifesto*. Nor was there any mention of the complete elimination of state power and the state machinery. Marx and Engels spoke about the "political rule of the proletariat", advising the workers to capture the state, destroy all privileges of the old class, and prepare for the eventual disappearance of the state.

We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, to win the battle of democracy ... . The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forees as rapidly as possible.

Marx and Engels were convinced that existing states, whether as instruments of class domination and oppression, or rule by bureaucratic parasites on the whole of society, would grow inherently strong and remain minority states representing the interests of the small, dominant and powerful possessing class. It was only when the proletarian majority seized the state structure that the state became truly democratic and majoritarian. Whatever might be the form the state assumed, it was powerful and the proletariat would have to contend with while making its revolution. In the later part of his life, Marx was convinced of the imperative need to destroy the state and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the initial stages, bearing in mind the example of the French Revolution of 1789, he anticipated a seizure of the existing state machine by the revolutionary proletariat for he believed that political centralization would assist the revolutionary process.

The initial "capture" thesis of the state, however, yielded to the "smash" thesis subsequently. The former viewpoint was articulated in the *Manifesto*, where the existing state structure would be used for revolutionizing the mode of production. The "smash" thesis was articulated in response to the experience of the Parisian Communards, as evident in the *Civil War in France* and the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. In a book review written around 1848— 1849, Marx observed that the destruction of the state had only one implication for the Communists, namely the cessation of an organized power of one class for the suppression of another class.

In the *Manifesto*, Marx described the nature of Communist society as one in which the classes and its antagonisms would have disappeared. The bourgeois society would be replaced by "an

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association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all". For the purpose of socializing the means of production, a list of 10 measures was outlined, which would vary from country to country, but which were essential prerequisites for a Communist society. These ten measures were as follows.

1. Abolition of landed property and application of all rents of land for public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax, and abolition of all rights of inheritance.
3. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
4. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state.
5. Centralization of the means of transport in the hands of the state.
6. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state.
7. Equal liability of all to labour.
8. Combination of agriculture and industry.
9. Gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools.

Beyond this, Marx did not delve into the transitional phase. Interestingly, many of these ideas were outlined by Engels in his *Principles of Communism* (1847), which formed the core of the *Manifesto*.

The Class Struggles in France

Marx modified his views on the state between 1848-1852 as a result of events in France, and more significantly after 1871. His ideas were the result of an elaborate misunderstanding of the French Revolution, of the role of classes and of the very nature of the proletarian revolution. The Bolsheviks in Russia imitated France as seen through the prism of the writings of Marx, which seemed to them more real than the actualities of French history.

Until March 1850, Marx and Engels did not apply the word "dictatorship" to the rule of the proletariat. The phrase was used as a tactical compromise slogan with the Blanquists, and then as a polemical device against the Anarchists and assorted reformists. Before that, they neither mentioned nor discussed the Babouvist-Blanquist conception of educational dictatorship for it contravened their vision of a proletarian revolution based on the faith they had in the masses to emancipate themselves. Hence, they did not feel the need for a period of educational rule by an enlightened minority, or the need to postpone democratic elections.

It was not Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881), but Louis Eugene Cavaignac, a general and an arch-antagonist of Blanqui, from whom Marx and Engels borrowed the word "dictatorship" and incorporated it into their vocabulary. Engels clarified that the "strictest centralization of state power" was necessary to fill the vacuum as a result of the destruction of the old order till the creation of the new one. Unlike the previous phases, the dictatorship of the proletariat would represent the rule of the majority over the minority. Marx accepted this formulation. Both were confident that it did not mean the permanent rule of one person or group.

In March 1850, the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" replaced the habitually used phrase "rule of the proletariat". Marx and Engels stressed the notion of extraordinary power during an emergency for a limited period of time. It was a constitutional dictatorship, like the one suggested by Babeuf and Blanqui, but differed from their conception insofar as it would not be educational. It did not mean the rule of a self-appointed committee on behalf of the masses, nor did it envisage the need for mass terror and liquidation.

Marx did not define, in any specific way, what the dictatorship of the proletariat entailed, and what its relationship with the state was. It was "a social description, a statement of the class character of the political power. It did not indicate a statement about the forms of government authority". But for some scholars, the concept was both a statement of the class character of

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political power, and a description of political power itself. "It is, in fact, the nature of political power which it describes which guarantees its class character".

To Marx and Engels, the dictatorship of the proletariat was by the *entire class*, for the revolution would be made by the masses themselves. In a series of articles written in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, which were subsequently compiled under the title *The Class Struggles in France* (1848-1850), Marx contended that

> ... the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally to the abolition of all relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionizing of all the ideas that result from these social relations .

The phrase dictatorship of the proletariat was incorporated into the first of the six statutes of the Universal Society. In a letter to Otta Luning, co-editor of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx clarified that he did not find any significant departure from the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat as articulated in the *Class Struggles*, to the one formulated in the *Manifesto*.

The ambiguous compromise slogan "dictatorship of the proletariat" would have died a natural death, had the Marxists and Blanquists not renewed their contacts in the aftermath of the Paris Commune. The ramification of the concept was attempted by Marx, when engaged with Michael Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814-1876) during their high-pitched debate in the First International, and in response to the initiatives undertaken by the German Social Democrats.

The Civil War in France

Meanwhile, an important event that helped in the clarification of the concept was the Paris Commune, leading to an immediate amendment of the *Manifesto* in 1872. "One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz. that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purpose".

Marx was enthused about the Commune, regarding it as a "glorious harbinger of a new society", and observed in his letter to Kugelman in April 1871 that:

> If you look at the last chapter of my *Eighteenth Brumaire*, you will find that I say that the next attempt of the French Revolution will no longer be, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another but to smash it and this is the precondition for every real people's revolution on the continent. And this is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting .

Marx characterized the Paris Commune as the first major rebellion of the modern industrial proletariat, in consonance with his belief that France would set the example in a struggle between capital and labour. In his address in 1868 to the General Council of The International Workingmen's Association or the First International in London, he outlined the importance of the Commune and its lessons for future socialist movements. These were identified as follows.

1. Abolition of the standing army and the institution of the citizen's militia.
2. Election of all officials, subjecting them to recall.
3. Removal of political attributes of the police.
4. Abolition of the monarchy.
5. The role of the majority in directing and performing all functions of the state, which were previously executed by a privileged minority.

With regard to the last-point, Marx emphasized the following measures.

1. Abolition of all representative allowances, all monetary benefits to officials, and reducing the remuneration for officials to the level of "workmen's wages".
2. Abolition of the distance between the governed and the governors, and erasing the labels of "High" dignitaries.

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3. Election of judges.
4. Universal suffrage, exercised freely and frequently.

The Commune was regarded as a working, and not a parliamentary, body exercising legislative and executive power simultaneously. It would break down the power of the modern state, as people would be organized on the basis of a decentralized federal system, with dissemination of power at the broadest and largest levels. Its real strength lay in the fact that it represented the working class, and was "the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour". Subsequently, in the 1891 edition of the *Civil War in France*, Engels eulogized the Commune as the prototype of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This was one of the examples of the different world-views of Marx and Engels.

The Critique of the Gotha Programme

The Anarchists were critical of Marx for retaining the state after the proletarian revolution, for it would amount to replacing the old despotic rule with a new one. They regarded the Marxist variant as essentially authoritarian and highly centralized, stifling voluntarism and individual initiative. The German Social Democrats, following Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864), articulated the possibilities of using the existing state for the realization of socialism and for the enhancement of human freedom. They favoured reforms, as opposed to revolution, and believed that the spread of suffrage would enable the workers to play a decisive role in parliament and the institutions of the state. These demands were incorporated in the Gotha Programme, which the Social Democratic Party adopted in 1875.

In response to both the Anarchists and the German Social Democrats, Marx wrote the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, in which he emphasized the transitional nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He outlined the two-phased development to full Communism, which could be attained through a revolutionary transformation of society. "Between the capitalist society and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into another. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can-be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat".

According to Marx, the first (or the lower) phase would still be "stamped with the marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges". The principle of distribution with regard to consumer goods would still be the principle of performance. In the second phase, production would be abundant, and distribution would be on the basis of one's needs. The principle of distribution would be "from each according to his ability to each according to his needs". This principle was initially advanced by Proudhon. Lenin characterized these two phases as "socialism" and "communism" respectively.

In the second phase, division of labour would be abolished and each individual would devote himself to a single life task. In the Communist society as portrayed in the *German Ideology*, Marx hoped that "each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes", allowing a person to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, "just as he has a mind to without ever becoming a hunter, fisherman, shepherd, or critic". Individual and private ownership of property would cease to exist, and be replaced by social ownership. The anti-thesis between mental and physical labour would be abolished, for labour would become not only a means of life, but also a prime want of life. He contrasted the higher form of Communism with Primitive or crude Communism, the first stage in the process of historical materialism. Primitive Communism was signified by the necessity of all to labour, a levelling down of all individual talents, and communal ownership of women, essentially indicating a negation of the human personality. All these features would be absent in the final Communist society.

Marx did not specify the mechanisms of change from stage I to stage II in the post-revolutionary phase of human history, leading to serious doubts as to how stage I would develop into stage II,

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and whether it would develop as intended. Since this process was not explained, the ultimate aim that "free development of each will lead to the free development of all" might not ever be realizable.

In the *Ami Duhring*, Engels introduced the notion of the "withering away of the state", and the fact that "government of persons would be replaced by administration of things", a phrase borrowed from William Morris (1834-1896). Engels stressed that the state would not be abolished, but it would wither away. Engels did not articulate on the nature of future society, except, like Marx, on insisting that it was the *condition*, rather than the nature and form of the future society that was important. Both Engels and Marx accepted that the proletarian state would be centrally planned and directed, but without coercion and force. However, they failed to resolve the possible conflict between centralized planning and individual freedom in the Communist society. They remained ambivalent on the role of markets, but the inference was that markets had to be eliminated, for they were unequal in their outcomes.

Thus, Marx and Engels reacted sharply to Bakunin's criticism about the statist implications of their conception and Lassalle's 'Free State'. By 1875, it became clear that the German Social Democrats began to think about using the existing state apparatus, and had settled down to a more reformist method. Marx still advocated the revolutionary overthrow of the existing bureaucratic-military state, and replacing it with the truly transitory (but majoritarian and democratic) dictatorship of the proletariat. Bakunin insisted on the immediate elimination of all forms of political authority, replacing them with spontaneous and voluntary organizations. Marx accepted the Anarchist demand of abolition of the state, but emphasized the majoritarian content of the transitional state purely as a temporary measure, hoping to counter both his critics, Bakunin and Lassalle.

12.6 Revisionism, Russian Revolution and Dictatorship of the Proletariat

In the 1890s, the German Social Democrats decided on a new programme, which was adopted as the official policy of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in 1891 for the next 30 years. The Erfurt Programme, as it came to be known, contained two parts. The first part was prepared by Karl Johann Kautsky (1854-1938), known as the Pope of Marxism and the most important Marxist theoretician of the period of the Second International (1890-1914). Reaffirming orthodox Marxist posture, he emphasized economic determinism. The second part was prepared by Bernstein, laying down practical reforms with a view to realizing socialism.

Bernstein rejected the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat as barbaric, "an atavism" belonging to a lower culture and civilization. He categorically insisted that socialism had to eschew all forms of violence and dictatorial rule. He conceived of a representative democratic state organized on the basis of socio-economic equity. He believed in democracy as the only framework for realizing Socialism. It was not surprising that he characterized the Bolshevik regime as a brutal distortion of Marxism. Within Russia, Julian Martov (1873-1923) of the Menshevik group accused the Bolsheviks of undermining the majoritarian content of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as envisaged by Marx and Engels. He contended that Lenin had superimposed on a passive majority the will of an active minority, thereby reducing the former to passive subjects in a social experiment. Martov and the Mensheviks broke away from the Russian Social Democratic Party (RSDLP), for they disagreed with Lenin's conception of the Vanguard Party.

In order to confront the Revisionist challenge, and seizing the observations made by Marx and Engels in 1882, Lenin as a strategist committed himself whole heartedly to effecting a working-class revolution, and explored its possibilities in Tsarist Russia. Taking a cue from Kautsky's formulations in the *Class Struggles* (1892), Lenin elaborated his theory of a party consisting of professional revolutionaries, on the plea that the workers were capable of only trade union, rather than revolutionary consciousness. Looking at the possibility of an outbreak of revolution in Tsarist Russia, to counter the continuous criticism by the German Left and to meet the radical challenge

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posed by Nikolai Ivanovinch Bukharin (1888-1938) in 1916, Lenin developed his theory of the state in *The State and Revolution*, regarded as the greatest contribution of Lenin to political theory.

Lenin reiterated the need to destroy the state machinery in a situation of revolutionary seizure of power. The state, per se continued in its socialist phase in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat with full democracy, exhibiting, like Marx, contempt for parliamentary and representative institutions. However, the suppression of the constituent assembly, universal suffrage, the exclusive monopoly and pre-eminence of the Communist Party and the brutal repressive measures against the Kronstadt rebellion, completed the logic of what was essentially a minority revolution led by the Bolsheviks. The libertarian and majoritarian perceptions of Lenin, in 1916, were subsumed by his authoritarian and undemocratic outlook in *What is to be done*! (1902).

The dictatorship of the proletariat, in practice, was reduced to the dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party over the proletariat. Both Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919) were critical of the Leninist experiment. Kautsky characterized the Bolshevik revolution as a *coup d'etat*, and its socialism as "barrack socialism", for it had nothing to do with majority rule and parliamentary democracy. Luxemburg expressed solidarity with Lenin and Trotsky for pre-empting a socialist revolution, but was critical of their abrogation of spontaneity, freedom of opinion and socialist democracy.

Lenin and Trotsky reacted sharply to Kautsky's criticism. Lenin dismissed the argument that democracy was not only compatible, but also a precondition for the proletarian rule, as irrelevant. He clarified that democracy was abolished only for the bourgeoisie. Subsequently, in 1921, Lenin acknowledged the lack of culture, and the fact that the Bolsheviks did not know how to rule, as the serious shortcomings of the new regime. Trotsky defended the use of terror, force and violence as means of safeguarding Socialism and its advancement in Russia. Later, Trotsky also turned critical of Stalin for making Socialism repressive and bureaucratic, never acknowledging that along with Lenin, he himself was instrumental for laying the foundations of Stalinism. In fact, Solzhenitsyn characterized Stalinism as the malignant form of Leninism.

12.7 Indequacies in the Marxist Theory of the State

Viewed in this perspective, all the experiments that were carried out in the twentieth century in the name of Marx have totally repudiated his principles. Russia's backwardness, the lack of a coherent theory of post-revolutionary society in Marxism, and Marx's personal fascination with the possibilities of absolute power, attenuated the Blanquism in Lenin and Stalin. If Stalinism was an offshoot of Leninism, then Leninism itself was inspired by Marxism, for Lenin repeatedly affirmed his commitment and faith in Marxist ideology. The distortions in Soviet Communism could be attributed to the shortcomings and inadequacies in Marx's world-view, the fact that Marx had pointed out that

> historical developments are always open to several possibilities. Yet Marx disregarded the possibilities open to his own theory; and here lies its major intellectual blunder ... he overlooked the possibility that one of the alternatives to which the future development of his own theory was open might be the combination of his philosophical and historical theory with the Jacobin tradition of merely political, subjectivist revolutionary action. Thus, if Marx's point of departure was Hegelian, so was his blind spot : like Hegel himself he did not subject his own theory to a dialectical critique.

Dahl asserted that Marxism could not be accepted "as an adequate political theory" on the basis of the basic propositions on democracy which were agreeable to all political parties, and defended zealously by them. These were: (*a*) inevitability of conflict of interests and articulation of wants as a matter of choice in a complex society, (*b*) resolution of such conflicts by majority rule, but with

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due concern for minority rights; and (*c*) freedom to form political parties, and recognition of free competition. The emphasis on harmony in Socialist society was inconsistent with the first proposition of the democratic theory. Marxism did not offer any clue to the distribution of political power in a Socialist society, and was equally ambiguous on the concept of majority rule. The introduction of universal adult franchise in Germany in 1866, the electoral reforms in England in 1867 and 1884, and the mushrooming of socialist parties, weakened the essential proposition of the state as an instrument of oppression, controlled by the bourgeois minority exploiting and oppressing the proletarian majority. The reforms gave the workers an opportunity to control the state by winning the majority of votes, and thereby seats in the parliament. "Marx's politics is based on particular qualities of the bourgeois state in the nineteenth century".

Marxism in theory and practice could never provide a primer for constitution-based representative democracy. The important fact to note was that "neither Marx nor Lenin spoke of a law governed state ... because they considered that the state would inevitably wither away".

Marx never addressed himself to the issue of rights, political freedom, power and the role of authority in a socialist society. For all his libertarian vision, Marx himself was consumed by the idea of having absolute, total, concentrated state power, unrestrained and unlimited. He was contemptuous, of, in fact had very little faith in, a constitution or law, dismissing them as shams, formalities and covers to conceal bourgeois oppression and domination. The attack on formal democracy by promising substantive democracy resulted in reducing formal democracy to the point of non-existence. Marx overlooked the protection that constitutional representative democracy and rule of law gave against arbitrary rule, and the freedom it ensured against physical harm. He failed to understand the dynamics of democracy in empowering people being more revolutionary than a bloody, violent revolution itself. "He profoundly underestimated the capacity of democratic societies to correct or mitigate the injustices that seemed to him built into capitalism. The concept of the 'class struggle' which is central in the thinking of all Marxists seems largely irrelevant in America and Western Europe".

Berlin's last observation about the obsolence of class struggle in advanced industrialized countries can be extended to the developing world now. There is no more talk of revolutionary transformation of society, or that the "East is Red". Moreover, the possibility of using democracy as a means of realizing socialism never moved to the centre stage of his analysis of future society. "The overall sweep of the Marxist historical scheme relegates democracy to a subsidiary role in the drama of human development".

This was where the Social Democrats scored over Marx, for they, and in particular Bernstein, insisted on the need to combine democracy (representative parliamentary institutions with universal suffrage) with socialism, bringing about a breach that could never be closed between German Marxism and Russian Communism.

The idea of Communist society being classless and equal remained a myth. Djilas, in the *New Class* (1959), pointed to the presence of the *nomenklatura* in the former communist societies, namely those who enjoyed privileges and special status because of their position within the hierarchy of the Communist Party, thus confirming the fears of Bakunin that the dictatorship of the proletariat would create *fresh* inequities and *new* forms of oppression and domination. Perhaps no one has captured the myth of a classless society better than Orwell in his *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eight-Four*. As Orwell observed succinctly "... so-called collectivist systems now existing only try to wipe out the individual because they are not really collectivist and certainly not egalitarian—because, in fact they are a sham covering a new form of class privilege".

An examination of the development of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat revealed a tension between the concept's organizational necessity, though maybe of a transitory kind, with the larger Marxist hypothesis of enlargement of human freedom. The idea of delineating and working out a participatory model of democracy was never completed by Marx. This was also compounded by Marx's inadequate handling of the crucial role of the theory of the state. In

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tackling the complexities of the modern state, the general descriptions of the ideal as realizing true democracy and Communism have proved to be extremely simplistic in providing the essential institutions of a modern democratic state. Marx's aversion to Utopian blueprinting made him ignore the details that were necessary for managing a society based on equity, just reward and freedom. The terms "true democracy" and "communism" hardly dealt with the complexities of modern times.

12.8 Women and the Gender Question

Like in many other areas, even with regard to the question of women, Marx made Hegel the starting point. Hegel regarded women as inferior, with less reasoning abilities, seeing the natural differences between men and women as immutable. Marx did not say much on the role and position of women. He took it for granted that Socialism would bring about their emancipation. In the *German Ideology* and the *Capital*, he spoke of the natural and spontaneous division of labour within the family. The natural relationship paved the way for a social one, and the first property relationship was the one when the man regarded his wife and children as his slaves. The man had power over them, and could do with their labour as he chose, though Marx did not explain how this came about. Marx did not focus his attention on the position and role of women.

Engels, in the *Origins*, provided a materialist account of the origins of patriarchy, and linked women's subordination with the rise of private property. In the *Holy Family*, Marx and Engels observed that the degree of emancipation of women could be used as a standard by which one could measure general emancipation. Marx reiterated this view in a letter to Dr L. Kugelmann in 1868, that social progress could be assessed exactly by the social position of women. In 1845, Marx warned against treating the family regardless of its specific historic setting. In his criticism of Max Stirner (1805-1856), he observed that it was a misconception to speak of the family without qualification. Historically, the bourgeoisie endowed the family with the characteristics of the bourgeois family, whose ties were boredom and money.

12.9 The Asiatic Mode of Production

Marx's views on the non-European world, like, his overall political theorizing, also flowed from Hegelian prescriptions. But in the evolution of these two basic themes, there was an interesting yet contradictory development. The contemporary analysis of Germany that Hegel offered was rejected on the basis of a universalistic criterion, while the notion of the unchanging and static nature of the non-European world was accepted without any critical examination. Marx used the phrase "Asiatic Mode of Production" to describe the non-European societies. In this formulation, there was a clear "discrepancy between the analytical and historical nature of the categories of ancient, feudal and bourgeois modes of production and the mere geographic designation of the Asiatic one" .

Prior to 1852, Marx did not show any specific interest in the non-European world. His interest arose as a result of a series of articles that he penned for the *New York Daily Tribune* (1852-1862). The Asiatic Mode of Production assumed importance subsequently, in the theoretical and political debates within Marxist circles. "The debates about the Asiatic Mode of Production has raised questions concerning not only the relevance of Marxist concepts outside the European context, but also the character of materialist explanations of class society, revolutionary change and world history".

The underlying assumption among many post-Renaissance European thinkers who took an interest in the non-European world was that there was a marked and qualitative distinction between the advanced European cultures and other backward civilizations. Montesquieu was the pioneer of this perception. Using climatic conditions as the yardstick, he noted that tropical climates were unsuited for democracies and individual freedom. Smith clubbed China, Egypt and India together for the special attention irrigation received in these societies. James Mill observed the difference between European feudalism and governmental arrangements in Asiatic societies. Richard Jones

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used the phrase "Asiatic society" and J.S. Mill used the term "Eastern society" in 1848. Others, like Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and Emile Durkheim (1855-1917), analyzed Asiatic societies from a comparative perspective. Hegel was the most influential among these thinkers, whose philosophy of history not only concurred with this prevailing European perception of the East, but also influenced—to a very large extent—the left Hegelians with respect to perceiving colonization as a modernizing force. For Hegel, with his clear Eurocentricism, India and China did not have any history as these were "stationery and fixed". This was true of all Asiatic societies. Hegel's point that the East lacked history influenced Marx.

Marx described the oriental societies of India and China as lacking in history, incapable of changing from within, and essentially stagnant. Since, by themselves, they would block historical progress, the industrialized West, when it became socialistic, would be the agent of liberation in the less developed areas. In other words, European socialism would have to precede national liberation movements in the Asian societies. Marx identified Europe with progress, and the Orient with stagnation. He looked upon imperialist rule as being simultaneously destructive and constructive. It was degenerative, for it destroyed indigenous institutions and practices; it was regenerative, for it created the modem techniques of production, brought political unity and social changes.

Marx and Engels concluded that the chief characteristic of Asiatic societies was the absence of private property, particularly private ownership of land. In contrast to the state in the European context, which was an instrument of class domination and exploitation, the state in Asiatic societies controlled all classes. It did not belong to the superstructure, but was decisive in the entire economic arena, building and managing water supply and the life breath of agriculture in arid areas. It performed economic and social functions for the whole of society. Social privileges emanated from service to the state, and not from the institution of private property, as was the case in Europe. Asiatic societies had an overdeveloped state, and an underdeveloped civil society. Military conquests and dynastic tussles ushered in changes periodically, without affecting the economic organization, for the state continued to be the real landlord. The unchanging nature of Asiatic societies was also buttressed by self-sufficient autarchic villages, which sustained themselves through agriculture and handicrafts.

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx and Engels developed on these preliminary sketches of Asiatic societies to highlight the key differences in the urban history of the West and the East. In the West, the existence of politically independent cities conducive to growth of the production of exchange values determined the development of a bourgeois class and industrial capitalism, whereas in the East, the city was artificially created by the state, and remained a "princely camp" subordinated to the countryside. The city was imposed on the economic structure of society. Social unity represented by the state lay in the autarchic self-sufficient villages where land was communally owned. Stability was ensured by simplicity of production. The state appropriated the surplus in the form of taxes. Factors like free markets, private property, guilds and bourgeois law, that led to the rise of the capitalist class in the West, were absent in Asiatic societies due to a centralized state that dominated and controlled civil society. For Marx, imperialism would act as a catalyst of change since these societies lacked the mechanisms for change. It was because of its covert defence of imperialism that Marxists have sought to dismantle the concept.

The Anarchists, and in particular Bakunin, defended the right of nations (including the predominantly peasant Eastern nations) to self-determination. The West was based on slavery, and did not prove that it was superior to the "barbarians of [the] Orient". He asserted that all states were constituted by their nature and the conditions of the purpose for which they existed, namely the absolute negation of human justice, freedom and morality. By this logic, he did not distinguish between the uncouth Tsarist Russia and the advanced countries of North Europe, for the former did the same thing as the latter, with the mask of hypocrisy.

The concept of the Asiatic Mode has had a chequered history. In the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Marx considered the Asiatic Mode as one of the "epochs marking

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progress in the economic development of society". Engels did not refer to the Asiatic Mode in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. It was in the context of discussions on revolutionary struggles in Russia, that the concept figured once again. Different political strategies were devised in view of Russia being feudal, semi-capitalist, authoritarian and partly Asiatic. In 1853, Marx and Engels characterized Tsarist Russia as "Semi-Asiatic". In the *Anti Duhring*, Engels viewed the Russia commune as the basis of oriental despotism. Between 1877 and 1882, Marx, in his letters to Vera Zaulich (1852-1919) and Engels, as a member of the editorial board of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, examined the prospects of revolution in Russia and whether in such an eventuality the commune could provide the foundations of socialism.

In exploring the possibilities of a world proletarian revolution, Marx and Engels began to show interest in the non-European world. The notion of the Asiatic Mode of Production examined the relevance of Marxist concepts outside the European context. While Marx and Engels were convinced that socialism represented the zenith of capitalism, and that the proletarian revolution would break out only in the advanced industrialized societies, they pointed out in 1882 that if a revolution would break out in Tsarist Russia, it would complement the efforts of the proletariat in the advanced West.

The Asiatic Mode paradigm undermined Marx's universalistic presumption that a ruling class could only be a proprietary class, i.e. a class that owned the means of production. The primary paradigm in the *Manifesto* and other writings did not focus on the class character of the state bureaucracy, which could be one of the reasons why the Asiatic Mode in particular and the theory of the state in general, remained so sketchy in the works of Marx and Engels.

12.10 Views On India

Analyzing India within the framework of the Asiatic Mode, Marx was convinced that Imperial Britain would establish the foundations of Western society in India, for English imperialism represented the only social revolution in Asia. This belief rested on the logic that though colonialism was brutal, it was dialectically important for the world proletarian revolution. Colonialism would unleash forces of modernization which would eventually lead to the emancipation of these areas. Marx's account of British imperialism led to the proposition that the more extensive the forms of imperialism, the more profound would be the consequences for modernization. Marx and Engels favoured colonialism, as it was a catalyst for modernization, though they did take note of regressive and exploitative side of it.

Marx noted that in India, England had a dual function, one destructive and the other regenerative. Colonization as a regenerative force brought about political unification, introduced railways, a free press, a trained army, Western education, rational ways of thinking, and abolished common land tenures. As for its being destructive, British colonization destroyed indigenous industries and handicrafts. Marx mentioned the exploitative role played by the East India Company, and the increasing resentment English capitalists had against its monopoly, preventing the transfer of surplus British capital to India. All these changes profoundly affected the static nature of Indian society. In this context, he mentioned superstition and narrow-mindedness, which reinforced animal worship, preventing development.

In spite of these insights, the fact remained that like the Conservatives, Marx and Engels favoured colonialism. In the fierce controversy between Marx and Bakunin, the question of the right of self-determination was one of the major issues of disagreement. Moreover, the Marxist view of the non-European world and the dominant streams of twentieth-century nationalist thought did not vindicate the Marxist thesis. Amilcar Cabral (1924-1973) rightly rejected this entire postulate of history, starting with the emergence of class struggle and the consequent thesis that the continents of Africa, Asia and America did not have any history before the colonial period. The factor of nationalism that contributed to the liberation of the colonies was completely ignored by Marx.

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Marx, in spite of his erudite scholarship, was a child of his times. He viewed the non-European world through the European perspective. His observations, however profound, reflected a great deal of prevailing Hegelian prejudices and Eurocentricism. Many of the Indian Marxists did not accept Marx's formulations on the Asiatic Mode, or his observations on British imperialism in India.

12.11 Theory of Surplus Value

Marx himself considered his theory of surplus-value his most important contribution to the progress of economic analysis. It is through this theory that the wide scope of his sociological and historical thought enables him simultaneously to place the capitalist mode of production in his historical context, and to find the root of its inner economic contradictions and its laws of motion in the specific relations of production on which it is based.

As said before, Marx's theory of classes is based on the recognition that in each class society, part of society (the ruling class) appropriates the social surplus product. But that surplus product can take three essentially different forms (or a combination of them). It can take the form of straight forward unpaid surplus labour, as in the slave mode of production, early feudalism or some sectors of the Asiatic mode of production (unpaid corvee labour for the Empire). It can take the form of goods appropriated by the ruling class in the form of use-values pure and simple (the products of surplus labour), as under feudalism when feudal rent is paid in a certain amount of produce (produce rent) or in its more modern remnants, such as sharecropping. And it can take a money form, like money-rent in the final phases of feudalism, and capitalist produts. Surplus-value is essentially just that: the money form of the social surplus product or, what amounts to the same, the money product of surplus labour. It has therefore a common root with all other forms of surplus product: unpaid labour.

This means that Marx's theory of surplus-value is basically a deduction (or residual) theory of the ruling classes' income. The whole social product (the net national income) is produced in the course of the process of production, exactly as the whole crop is harvested by the peasants. What happens on the market (or through appropriation of the produce) is a distribution (or redistribution) or what already has been created. The surplus product, and therefore also its money form, surplus-value, is the residual of that new (net) social product (income) which remains after the producing classes have received their compensation (under capitalism: their wages). This 'deduction' theory of the ruling classes' income is thus ipso factor an exploitaton theory. Not in the ethical sense of the world-although Marx and Engels obviously manifested a lotof understandable moral indignation at the fate of all the exploited throughout history, and especially at the fate of the modernproletariat-but in the economic one. The income of the ruling classes can always be reduced in the final analysis to the product of unpaid labour: that is the heart of Marx's theory of exploitation.

Marx likewise laid bare the economic mechanism through which surplus-value originates. At the basis of that economic mechanism is a huge social upheaval which started in Western Europe in the 15th century and slowly spread over the rest of the continent and all other continents (in many so-called underdeveloped countries, it is still going on to this day).

Self-Assessment

Choose the correct options

1. Who said, "The history of all hitherto existing society in the history of class struggles".
   (*i*) Marx (*ii*) Engels (*iii*) Marx-Engels (*iv*) None of these
2. The label "Utopian Socialists" was first used by ..... in the History of political economy.
   (*i*) Heinrich Marx (*ii*) Jerome Blanqui (*iii*) Hegel (*iv*) None of these

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3. .....was the first to point out the contradictions within the revolutionary slogans of liberty and equality.

   (*i*) Francois Noel Gracchus Babeuf (*ii*) Marx

   (*iii*) Hegel (*iv*) None of these

4. The poem 'The player' was written by .....

   (*i*) Marx (*ii*) Bentham

   (*iii*) Hegel (*iv*) None of these

5. .....was known as the Pope of Marxism

   (*i*) Karl Johann Kautsky (*ii*) Marx

   (*iii*) Lenin (*iv*) None of these

12.12 Summary

- Marxism's dream of creating a classless society beyond conflict and based on equality remained illusory. However, its critique of exploitation and alienation, and the hope of creating a truly emancipated society that would allow the full flowering of human creativity, would continue to be a starting point of any Utopian project. In spite of Marx's Utopia being truly generous, it displayed a potential for being tyrannical, despotic and arbitrary. Centralization of power and absence of checks oh absolute power were themselves inimical to true human liberation and freedom. He "offered no good reason to believe that the power politics of radicalism would prove to be less authoritarian in practice than the power politics of conservative nationalism". Commenting on the activities of his fellow comrades, which were in total negation of his ideals, Marx once proclaimed that he was not a Marxist. This proved to be a serious limitation of his theory, even during his lifetime, as it was after his death. He would be remembered at best as a critic of early nineteenth-century capitalism and politics. The limitations and inadequacies within the doctrine are reminders that his blueprint was, as Koestler remarked, "a God that failed".
- Marx's class theory rests on the premise that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." According to this view, ever since human society emerged from its primitive and relatively undifferentiated state if has remained fundamentally dividend between classes who clash in the pursuit of class interest. In the world of capitalism, for example, the nuclear cell of the capitalist system, the factory, is the prime locus of antagonism between classes-between exploiters and exploited, between buyer and selles of labour power-rather than of functional collaboration. Class interests and the confrontations of power that they bring in their wake are to Marx the central determinant of social and historical process.
- Marx's analysis continually centres on how the relationships between men are shaped by their relative positions in regard to the means of production, that is, by their differential access to scare resources and scarce power. He notes that unequal access need not at all times and under all conditions lead to active class struggle. But he considered it axiomatic that the potential for class conflict is inherent in every differentiated society, since such a society systematically generates conflicts of interest between persons and groups differentially located within the social structure, and, more particulary, in relation to the means of production. Marx was concerned with the ways inwhich specific positions in the social structure tended to shape the social experierices of their incumbents and to predispose them to actions oriented to improve their collective fate.

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12.13 Key–Words

1. Universalistic : It refers to religious, theological and philosophical concepts with universal application or applicability.
2. Discrepancy : a conflict or variation, as between facts, figures or claims.
3. Proletariat : It is a term used to identify a lower social class, usually the working class; a member of such a class is proletarian.

Answers- Self Assessment

1. (*iii*) 2. (*ii*) 3. (*i*) 4. (*i*) 5. (*i*)

12.14 Review Questions

1. What did Marx mean by the economic structure of society contributed by its relations of productions is the real foundation of society.
2. Explain the theory of class war.
3. Write a short note on Dictatorship of the proletariat.
4. Write an essay on the class struggle and social change.
5. Write a short note the Theory of Surplus Value.

12.15 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

Sukanya Das, Lovely Professional University
Manu Sharma, Lovely Professional University

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Unit 13: John Stuart Mill: His Life and Theory of Liberty

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Know about Mill's life and work.
- Analyse utilitarianism.
- Discuss defence of individual freedom and individuality.
- Explain equality within the family.

Introduction

John Stuart Mill (1806-873) was the most influential political thinker of the nineteenth century. In his political theory, liberalism made a transition from *laissez faire* to an active role for the state, from a negative to a positive conception of liberty, and from an atomistic to a more social conception of individuality. While Mill was a liberal, he could also be regarded, at the same time, as a reluctant democrat, a pluralist, a cooperative socialist, an elitist and a feminist.

Mill's transformative criticism of Benthamite utilitarianism was one of his greatest contributions to political thought. He regarded himself as Peter, who defied his master, for he argued that the principle of greatest happiness of the greatest number was defensible only if a distinction was made between happiness and pleasure. He also replaced the *quantitative* approach of Bentham by a *qualitative* one. Mill also convincingly argued for a defence of basic freedoms by law. The purpose of law was to maximize liberty, as it gave an opportunity for "self-realization". He made an important distinction between the public sphere regulated by law, and the private sphere regulated by morality. He saw the need for a liberal society .is a basic precondition of a liberal state and government (Sabine 1973: 642). The reason for this emphasis in the context of the Anglo-American tradition was because the liberal state was already an irreversible reality. He defended free speech and the right of individuality. Mill, unlike many contemporary liberals, championed women's rights, seeing sexual inequality as ethically and legally untenable.

Mill updated Smith's ideas in his *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). He not only defended *laissez faire* but also argued that a just and orderly economic development was possible if trade unions existed, for that would restore a balance in the bargaining process between the capitalists and

their employees. His concern for social justice was reflected in his proposals for redistribution, mainly by taxation. He ignored Ricardo's labour theory of value, since price was determined by forces of demand and supply

13.1 Life Sketch

John Stuart Mill was born in London on May 20, 1806. He had eight younger siblings. His father James Mill came from Scotland, with the desire to become a writer. Initially, the senior Mill tried journalism and then concentrated on writing a *History of British India*, which took him 11 years to complete. It remained one of the seminal works on Indian history of the eighteenth century, and is still used as a reference work.

> **Caution** A person may cause evil to others not only by his action but by his inaction, and either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury.

India influenced the life of the young Mill, and subsequently determined his career. All his learning came from his father, and he read the books his father had been reading for writing the book on India. Al the age of 11, he began to help his father by reading the proofs of his father's books. Immediately after the publication of *History of British India* in 1818, James Mill was appointed as an assistant examiner at the East India House. It was an important event in his life, as this solved his financial problems, enabling him to devote his time and attention to write on areas of his prime interest: philosophical and political problem.

He could also conceive of a liberal profession for his eldest son, John Stuart. In the beginning, he thought of a career in law for him, but when another vacancy arose for another assistant examiner in 1823, John Stuart got the post and served the British government till his retirement.

As James Mill decided to teach his son all by himself at home, the latter was denied the usual experience of going to a regular school. His education did not include any children's books or toys, for he started to learn Greek at the age of 4 and Latin at 8. By the time he was 10, he had read many of Plato's dialogues, logic and history. He was familiar with the writings of Euripides, Homer, Polybius, Sophocles and Thucydides. He could also solve problems in algebra, geometry, differential calculus and higher mathematics. So dominant was his father's influence, that John Stuart could not recollect his mother's contributions to his formative years as a child. At the age of 13, he was introduced to serious reading of the English classical economists, and published an introductory textbook in economics entitled *Elements of Political Economy* (1820) at the age of 14. From Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Comte, Goethe, and Wordsworth, he came to value poetry and art. He reviewed Alexis de Tocqueville's (1805-1859) *Democracy in America* in two parts in 1835 and 1840, a book that left a deep impact on him.

From the training that John Stuart received at home, he was convinced that nurture more than nature played a crucial role in the formation of character. It also assured him of the importance education could play in transforming human nature. In his *Autobiography*, which he wrote in the 1850s, he acknowledged his father's contribution in shaping his mental abilities and physical strength, to the extent that he never had a normal boyhood.

By the age of 20, Mill started to write for newspapers and periodicals. He contributed to every aspect of political theory. His *System of Logic* (1843), which he began writing in the 1820s, tried to elucidate a coherent philosophy of politics. The *Logic* combined the British empiricist tradition of Locke and Hume of associational pyschology with a conception of social sciences based on the

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paradigm of Newtonian physics. His essays *On Liberty* (1859) and *The Subjection of Women* (1869) were classic elaborations of liberal thought on important issues like law, rights and liberty. His *The Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) provided an outline of his ideal government based on proportional representation, protection of minorities and institutions of self-government. His famous pamphlet *Utilitarianism* (1863) endorsed the Benthamite principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, yet made a significant departure from the Benthamite assumption by arguing that this principle could only be defended if one distinguished *happiness* from *pleasure*. His essays on Bentham and Coleridge, written between 1838 and 1840, enabled him to critically dissect Benthamism.

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A person may cause evil to others not only by his actions but by his inaction, and in either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury. **—Stuart Mill**

In 1826, Mill experienced a "mental crisis" when he lost all his capacity for joy in life. He recovered by discovering the romantic poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth. He also realized the incompleteness of his education, namely the lack of the emotional side of life. In his re-examination of Benthamite philosophy, he attributed its one-sidedness to Bentham's lack of experience, imagination and emotions. He made use of Coleridge's poems to broaden Benthamism, and made room for emotional, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions. However, he never wavered from the fundamentals of Benthamism, though the major difference between them was that Bentham followed a more simplistic picturization of the human nature of the French Utilitarians, whereas Mill followed the more sophisticated Utilitarianism of Hume. "The distinctive characteristic of Mill's utilitarianism ... was that he tried to express a conception of moral character consonant with his own personal idealism".

Mill acknowledged that both *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women* were a joint endeavours with Harriet Hardy Taylor, whom he met in 1830. Though Harriet was married, Mill fell in love with her. The two maintained an intimate but chaste friendship for the next 19 years. Harriet's husband John Taylor died in 1849. In 1851, Mill married Harriet, and described her as the honour and chief blessing of his existence, a source of great inspiration for his attempts to bring about human improvement. He was confident that had Harriet lived at a time when women had greater opportunities, she would have been "eminent among the rulers of mankind". Mill died in 1873 at Avignon, England.

13.2 Critique of Utilitarianism

Mill criticized and modified Bentham's Utilitarianism by taking into account "factors like moral motives, sociability, feeling of universal altruism, sympathy and a new concept of justice with the key idea of impartiality". He asserted that the chief deficiency of Benthamite ethics was the neglect of individual character, and hence stressed on the cultivation of feelings and imagination as part of good life. Poetry, drama, music, painting was essential ingredients, both for human happiness and formation of character. They were "instruments of human culture". He made happiness and the dignity of man, and not the principle of pleasure, the chief end of life. He defined happiness to mean perfection of human nature, cultivation of moral virtues and lofty aspirations, total control over one's appetites and desires, and recognition of individual and collective interests.

> Mill's ethics was important for liberalism because in effect it abandoned egoism, assumed that social welfare is a matter of concern to all men of good will, and regarded freedom, integrity, self respect, and personal distinction as intrinsic goods apart from their contribution to happiness.

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Mill retained the basic premise of Utilitarianism, but distinguished between higher and lower pleasures, and that greater human pleasure meant an increase not merely in the *quantity* but also in the *quality* of goods enjoyed. He insisted that human beings were capable of intellectual and moral pleasures, which were superior to the physical ones that they shared with animals. He succinctly summarized the difference in his famous "and oft-quoted statement :

> It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied, it is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool or the pig is of a different opinion it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party in comparison knows both sides.

Mill pointed out that every human action had three aspects: (*a*) the *moral aspect* of right and wrong, (*b*) the *aesthetic aspect* (or its beauty); and (*c*) the *sympathetic aspect* of its loveableness. The first principle instructed one to (dis)approve, the second taught one to admire or despise, and the third enabled one to love, pity or dislike. He regarded individual self-development and diversity as the ultimate ends, important components of human happiness and the principal ingredients of individual and social progress.

Mill used the principle of utility, which he regarded as the "ultimate appeal on all ethical questions" to support his principle of liberty, but then it was Utilitarianism based on the permanent interests of the individual as a progressive being. He made a distinction between toleration and suppression of offensive practices. In case of offences against public decency, majority sentiment would prevail. Beyond these, minorities must be granted the freedom of thought and expression, and the right to live as they pleased.

Mill also tried to reconcile the interests of the individual and society. He spoke of nobility of character, a trait that was closely related to altruism, meaning that people did what was good for society, rather than for themselves. The pleasures they derived from doing good for society might outweigh the ones that aimed at self-indulgence, contributing to their happiness. Mill saw social feelings and consciences as part of the psychological attributes of a person. He characterized society as being natural and habitual, for the individual was a social person. To be less than social was inconceivable. The more these feelings were heightened, private good and public good coincided.

Mill also stated that pleasures could not be measured objectively. The felicific calculus was absurd; one had to rely upon the judgement of the competent and wise. He described the state as an instrument that would bring about transformation of the human being. The state played a crucial role in shaping the ends of an individual through education, an idea that found full flowering in Green's philosophy. Mill was the hyphen that joined Bentham with Green.

13.3 Defence of Individual Freedom and Individuality

In *On Liberty*, Mill stated one simple principle that governed the actions of society and the individual in the way of compulsion and control.

> ... the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their members, is self-protection. That is the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will is to prevent harm to others.

Mill defended the right of the individual to freedom. In its negative sense, it meant that society had no right to coerce an unwilling individual, except for self-defence. "It is being left to oneself; all restraints *qua* restraints is an evil". In its positive sense it meant the grant of the largest and the greatest amount of freedom for the pursuit of the individual's creative impulses and energies, and for self-development. If there was a clash between the opinion of the individual and that of the community, it was *the individual who was the ultimate judge*, unless the community could convince

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him without resorting to threat and coercion.

Mill laid down the grounds for justifiable interference. Any activity that pertained to the individual alone represented the space over which no coercive interference, either from the government or from other people, was permissible. The realm which pertained to the society or the public was the space in which coercion could be used to make the individual conform to some standard of conduct. The distinction between the two areas was stated by the distinction Mill made between self-regarding and other-regarding actions, a distinction made originally by Bentham.

> The only part of the conduct of any one, for which is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concern himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.

Mill defended the right of individuality, which meant the right of choice. As far as self-regarding actions were concerned, he explained why coercion would be detrimental to self-development. First, the evils of coercion far outweighed the good achieved. Second, individuals were so diverse in their needs and capacities for happiness that coercion would be futile. Since the person was the best judge of his own interests, therefore he had the information and the incentive to achieve them. Third, since diversity was in itself good, other things being equal, it should be encouraged. Last, freedom was the most important requirement in the life of a rational person. Mill contended that positive liberty, i.e. autonomy and self-mastery, were inherently desirable and it was possible if individuals were allowed to develop their own talents and invent their own lifestyles, i.e. a great deal of negative liberty. Hence, he made a strong case for negative liberty, and the liberal state and liberal society were essential prerequisites. He warned that pressures of public opinion could turn Victorian Britain into a nation of dull conformists. Mill recommended interference with liberty of action of any person, either individually or collectively on grounds of self-protection : "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral is not a sufficient warrant".

Mill contended that society could limit individual liberty to prevent harm to other people. He regarded liberty of conscience, liberty to express and publish one's opinions, liberty to live as one pleased and freedom of association as essential for a meaningful life and for the pursuit of one's own good. His defence of freedom of thought and expression was one of the most powerful and eloquent expositions in the Western intellectual tradition. "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind".

Mill's defence of freedom of thought and discussion was linked to the persecution of error. Even if an opinion was incorrect, it ought to be articulated, for only through active interaction and dialogue could opinions evolve; otherwise they would lose their vitality and become dead dogmas. Ideas were to be subjected to critical scrutiny from other points of view for arriving at the truth. He supported individuality, for great advances in society were made possible only by creative individuals. Creativity could be effective only if allowed to function freely. The early liberals defended liberty for the sake of efficient government, whereas for Mill, liberty was good in itself, for it helped in the development of a humane, civilized, moral person. It was "beneficial both to society that permits them and to the individual that enjoys them". Mill emphasized the larger societal context within which political institutions and individuals worked.

Caution Everyone who receives the protection of society owes a return for the benefit.

— Stuart Mill

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Mill accepted the observation of Tocqueville that the modern industrial societies were becoming more egalitarian and socially conformist, thereby threatening individuality and creativity. He was fearful "lest the inevitable growth of social equality and of the government of public opinion should impose on mankind an oppressive yoke of uniformity in opinion and practice" . For Mill, the singular threat to individual liberty was from the tyranny and intolerance of the majority in its quest for extreme egalitarianism and social conformity. This made him realize the inadequacy of early liberalism.

> ... when society is itself the tyrant—society collectively over the separate individuals who compose it—its means of tyrannizing are not restricted to the act which it may do by the hands of its political functionaries Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough; there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them; to fetter the development, and if possible, prevent the formation, of any individuality not in harmony with its ways and compels all characters to fashion themselves upon the model of its own. There is a limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence : and to find that limit, and maintain it against encroachment, is as indispensable to a good condition of human affairs, as protection against political despotism.

Mill pointed out that in the area of thought and discussion the active and inquiring mind had become morally timid, for it concealed the true opinion when discussed in public. "Our merely social intolerance kills no one, roots out no public, but induces men to disguise them, or to abstain from any active effort for their diffusion" (Mill ibid: 93).

The majority projected itself as the controller of social opinion, as the "moral police". Social tyranny was exercised in subtle forms like customs, conventions and mass opinion, which did not make an individual stop and think where and how one had come to acquire these. There was an absence of "individuality". Individuality, to Mill, was not mere non-conformism, but signified the act of questioning, the right to choice. He encouraged eccentricity, "the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom" at a time when mass opinion was exceptionally assertive. On the contrary, when the pressure to conform socially was not so strong, then there was no need to encourage eccentricity. The second qualification was the link Mill established between the desirability of difference and the desirability of independence of character. It was only with moral and mental autonomy that there would be considerable variety of thought and behaviour.

Individuality, to Mill, meant the power or capacity for critical enquiry and responsible thought. It meant self-development and the expression of free will. He stressed absolute liberty of conscience, belief and expression, for they were crucial to human progress. Mill offered two arguments for liberty of expression in the service of truth: (*a*) the dissenting opinion could be true and its suppression would rob humankind of useful knowledge; and (*b*) even if the opinion was false, it would strengthen the correct view by challenging it.

> But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

For Mill, all creative faculties and the great goods of life could develop only through freedom and "experiments in living". *On Liberty* constituted the most persuasive and convincing defence of the principle of individual liberty ever written. Like his father James Mill, he also believed in the individual's capacity for education, by which he meant not only intellectual training or cultivation

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of critical enquiry, but also the training of individual character. He regarded individual character as a result of "civilization, instruction, education and culture" (Mill ibid: 115). Happiness, for Mill, was the ability of the individual to discover his innate powers and develop these while exercising his human abilities of Autonomous thought and action. Happiness meant liberty and individuality. Liberty was regarded as a fundamental prerequisite for leading a good, worthy and dignified life. "The contention of the essay *On Liberty* is that happiness so conceived is best achieved in a free-society governed by the Principle of Liberty".

Mill applied the principle of liberty to mature individuals, and excluded children, invalids, the mentally handicapped and barbarian societies in which race itself was considered "nonage". Liberty could be withheld where individuals were not educated. He considered liberty as belonging to higher and advanced civilizations, and prescribed despotism or paternalism with severe restrictions in case of lower ones.

> Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement and the means justified by actually effecting that end. Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion.

Mill also cautioned against sacrifice or infringement of liberty for the sake of making a state strong. Such an action or policy would be inherently counter-productive, for states were made up of the individuals who composed them. His concluding paragraph was a good testimony of the liberal temper and outlook.

> A state which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes will find that With small men no great thing can really be accomplished; and that the perfection of machinery to which it has sacrificed everything, will in the end avail it nothing, for want of the vital power which, in order that the machine might work smoothly, it has preferred to banish (Mill ibid: 120).

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But society has now fairly got the better of individuality; and the danger which threatens human nature is not the excess, not the deficiency of personal impulses and preferences.

It is generally believed that Mill's essay on liberty was essentially written with the purpose of defending the idea of negative liberty (Berlin 1969). Barry (1995: 216, 227) questioned this assessment, for he contended that Mill understood liberty not only as involving absence of restraints, but also as self-mastery, involving the exercise of choice. It is true that Mill advanced a notion of positive liberty, but he valued choice and individuality as ends in themselves, and not because they promoted general happiness. He did not propose a single overarching principle or values which normally accompanied theories of positive liberty (Berlin 1969). Conscious of the power society and the majority could wield, Mill sought to protect the individual's private space. He was right in observing that a society could be as oppressive as a government. The theme in *On Liberty* was not the absence of restraints, but the denial of individual autonomy by the coercion exercised by a moral majority and/or an intrusive public opinion (Berlin ibid).

By individuality, Mill meant the property in human beings that made possible the scrutiny of prevailing ideas and conventions and subjecting them to the litmus test of reason. Freedom meant not only absence of restraints, but also an ability to cultivate some desirable qualities. It was a notion that was rooted in the individual's ability to exercise his choice, for otherwise a human being did not differ from the apes. However, Mill's linkage between individuality and liberty made him conclude that only a minority was in a position to enjoy freedom. The majority of people remained enslaved

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in customs, and hence not free. In spite of his elitism, he remained an uncompromising liberal, for he ruled out paternalism, the idea that law and society could intervene in order to do good to the individual. He explicitly ruled out interference in self-regarding actions. On this score, he differed from Bentham, who allowed the pleasure of malevolence, namely if the majority abhorred a particular kind of private conduct, then it was similar to the pain it would cause to the individual if such a conduct was prohibited. Mill, disagreeing, explicitly stated that the right of liberty could be sacrificed only for some "other right", a point that has been reiterated by Rawls. However, he failed to analyze and establish a relationship between freedom and responsibility.

> At times he retained the traditional view derived from Bentham that any compulsion of even any social influence is an abridgement of liberty. Yet he never supposed that there could be any important freedom without law and when he identified liberty with civilization, he did not imagine that there could be civilization without society. What Mill's theory required was a thoroughgoing consideration of the dependence of personal liberty on social and legal rights and obligations. It was this which T.H. Green tried to add to liberalism.

Mill failed to specify the proper limits of legislation, and was unclear when it came to actual cases. For instance, he supported compulsory education, regulations of business and industry in the interest of public-welfare and good, but regarded prohibition as an intrusion on liberty.

Sir Ernest Barker (1950) made an interesting observation when he remarked that Mill, in reality, was a prophet of an empty liberty and an abstract individual. This observation flowed from the interpretation that the absolutist statements on liberty like the rights of one individual against the rest was not substantiated when one assessed Mill's writings in their totality. Mill separated the inseparable. The conduct of any person was a single whole and there could be nothing in it that concerns himself and did not concern others. Bosanquet too advanced a similar point that every action of a person would affect others and the demarcation between self-regarding and other-regarding did not hold good.

Mill qualified his statements, circumscribing his original intent on liberty. For instance, his compartmentalization between self-regard and other-regarding actions, and the tension between his tilt towards welfarism, which conflicted with individualism, were all indications of this incompleteness. But the point Barker ignored was the fact that the tension that emerged in Mill was an inevitable consequence of attempting to create a realistic political theory which attempted to extend the frontiers of liberty as much as possible. In fact, no political theorist including the contemporary ones like Rawls, Nozick and Raz, are free from this inevitable tension.

13.4 Equality within the Family and between the Sexes

Mill's thought and activism could be distinguished from those of his predecessors within the liberal tradition, because of his application of the principles of liberalism to the question of women. For Mill, improving women's position by giving them suffrage, education and employment opportunities was a stepping stone to progress and civility.

Mill rightly regarded improvement in the position of women as a concern not restricted to women alone, but of entire humankind. *The Subjection* therefore made a strong claim for equal status in three key areas : women's right to vote, right to equal opportunities in education, and employment. He acknowledged the tremendous impact the writings of his mentor (Bentham) and his father had on his intellectual development, for both of them had to grapple with the issue in the course of a long-drawn-out debate on the subject. The other intellectual influences on Mill with regard to the women's question had been those of Harriet Taylor Mill, W.J. Fox, William Thompson and the Saint Simonians like Saint-Bazard, Enfantin and Pierre Leroux, from whom he learnt to think in terms of stages of progress.

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Liberty and self-determination were two themes that figured prominently in Mill's writings. Freedom, he believed, was the most precious and crucial issue for a human's well-being. In this context, women were the subjugated sex denied access to their own potential, and subjected to the unquestioned prejudices and biases of society. He declared his concern to show that

> the existing relations between the sexes, the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement, and that it ought to be replaced by the principle of perfect equality admitting no power or privilege on the one side nor liability on the Other.

Equality as a legal right between the sexes was Mill's main concern. He referred to women as both the subject and the enslaved class, for their position was worse than that of slaves. Unlike slaves, they were in a "chronic state of bribery and intimidation combined". Mill's *The Subjection*

> ... is avowedly devoted to condemning the legal inferiority of women in Victorian England, but it ends with an argument from the absolute value of liberty : no country would surrender its independence for any amount of prosperity, and no human being who has tasted freedom would give, it up at any price. What further proof could there be of the supreme value of liberty, for women as well as for men?.

Writing to Comte, Mill pointed out that women's capacities were spent seeking happiness not in their own lives, but exclusively for the favour and affection of the other sex, which was only given to them on the condition of their dependence. The parallel between women and slaves was used to depict the reality of nineteenth-century England, where, on marriage, the woman became subservient to her husband both in physical being and property. For women, marriage was like Hobson's choice, either marry and face the abuses and loss of dignity that subjugation and subservience entailed, or remain single and get deprived of educational and professional opportunities. A woman was not free within marriage, nor was she free to remain unmarried. Through the description of Eleanor Garrett (the sister of Millicent Garrett Fawcett, the suffrage leader), Mill explained how unmarried women in the nineteenth century were deprived of avenues for leading a good and independent life. He deplored the lack of freedom of choice for women, and contended that equality should be the ordering principle of societal and personal relationships "The work was a pioneering effort, rightly honoured as one of the first essays to discuss the inequality of women as a political problem and to consider its sources and solutions in a scholarly manner".

Mill pointed out that opposition to sexual equality was not based on reason. To dismiss equality of sexes as a mere theoretical proposition did not lend credibility to the argument that women were weaker, and hence subordinate. He agreed that the majority opinion favoured inequality, but this he contended went against reason. The basis for such a supposition was that it was derived from the generality of the practice in the history of humankind, and hence was regarded as good. But Mill pointed out that the subordination of women was only due to the fact that they were physically not as strong as men. In fact, the origins of women's subjection was in physical force, of the allegedly superior bodily strength of men. Consequently, while this had become a virtue in a man, the opposite, namely renunciation, patience, resignation and submission to power, have been regarded as characteristics of a gentle and graceful woman. The subjection of women was similar to slavery. "So true is it that unnatural generally means only uncustomary, and that everything which is usual appears natural. The subjection of women to men being a universal custom, any departure from it quite naturally appears unnatural".

Mill pointed out that the rule of men over women was not entirely and altogether based on force. Women also accepted it voluntarily without complaint and became consenting parties to their subordination. Men, on their part, expected not only obedience, but even affection from women.

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This was ensured through education, training and the socialization process. Women from childhood were taught to be submissive, yielding and accommodating, rather than become independent with self-will and self-control. They were taught to live for others, their husbands and children. Selfless devotion was considered to be the best feminine trait, the glory of womanhood.

> When we put together three things—first, the natural attraction between opposite sexes, secondly the wife's entire dependence on the husband, every privilege or pleasure she has being either his gift, or depending entirely on his will; and lastly, that the principal object of human pursuit, consideration, and all objects of social ambition, can in general be sought or obtained by her only through him, it would be a miracle if the object of being attractive to men had not become the polar star of feminine education and formation of character .

Sexual relations which were based on force gradually softened, and with the progress of society from status to contract, it came to rest on consent. In case of a pre-contractual social arrangement, birth determined one's position and privileges, while modern society was characterized by the principle of equality. Every individual enjoyed greater freedom of choice to pursue his own life and improve his faculties. However, women continued to be denied this opportunity, for they were still born to a particular place, and were not free to do what they chose to. Paradoxical as it seemed, the modern world accepted the general social practice of human equality, but not gender equality. For Mill, denying women an equal position only demeaned a man.

> A most beneficial change, if the companionship were between equals; but being unequals it produces ... a progressive deterioration among men in what had hitherto been considered the masculine excellences. Those who are so careful that women should not become men, do not see that men are becoming, what they have decided that women should be, are falling into the feebleness which they have so long cultivated in their companions. Those who are associated in their lives, tend to become assimilated in character. In the present closeness of association between the sexes, men cannot retain manliness unless women acquire it .

Here Mill echoed the sentiments of his father, who too felt that men would be debased if they exercised dominance and power over their women. For both father and son, the ideal was a compassionate marriage between a strong-minded man and a strong-minded woman. Like Wollstonecraft, John Stuart believed that women could earn their liberation with the support of men. Both presented a reasonable critique of male domination within marriage. Mill extended it by pleading for a relationship based on mutual friendship and respect.

Like Wollstonecraft, Mill rejected the contention that the nature of women differed from that of men, and that a woman's nature was contrived and artificial. He dismissed the idea that the nature of women was different, because no one had ever seen a free woman in a free society. If women were the way they were, it was because of years of suppression and domination, and had nothing to do with their natures or dispositions. He subscribed to the view that, by and large, human nature and character were shaped by the circumstances in which individuals were found, and was sanguine that unless and until women were granted freedom, they could not express themselves. The process itself could take longer, but that could not be the basis for denying women the freedom and opportunities for their fullest development.

Like Wollstonecraft, Mill believed that women were as bright and gifted as men, and once granted the same "eagerness for fame", women would achieve the same success. Moreover, a judgement regarding capacities and talent in women could be made only after generations of women benefited from equal opportunities for education and employment. He rejected the idea that it was natural for a woman to be a mother, and a wife, and felt that it was the woman who should be able to decide whether to marry and manage a house, or to pursue a career. He contended that it was society, however, that had decided marriage to be the ultimate aim of a woman.

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> Marriage being the destination appointed by society for women, the prospect they are brought up to, and the object which it intended should be sought by all of them, except those who are too little attractive to be chosen by any man as his companion; one might have supposed that everything would have been done to make this condition as eligible to them as possible, that they might have no cause to regret being denied the option of any other. Society, however, both in this, and, at first, in all other cases has preferred to attain its object by foul rather than fair means.

Like Wollstonecraft and Margaret Fuller (1810-1913), Mill articulated and defended the right of women to be considered as free rational beings capable of choosing the life they would like to lead for themselves, rather than being dictated by what society thought they *should* be or do. Mill was confident that women, even if granted freedom and opportunities, would not fail to perform their traditional functions. It was not a question of a choice between domesticity and a career. The reason why men shied away from granting equal status to women was because *they were afraid of marriage on equal terms*.

As a member of the English Parliament, Mill supported a Married Women's Property Bill. He contended that England had to move beyond the "savage state" where marriage was based on the idea that one had to have absolute power over the other. He pointed out that the position of the wife under the common law of England "is worse than that of slaves in the laws of many countries; by the Roman law, for example, a slave might have his peculiar status which to a certain extent the law guaranteed to him for his exclusive use" (Mill ibid: 225).

Mill further pointed out that marriage did not give the woman the dignity and equal status that she ought to get. Once married, she was totally under the control of her husband. She was denied by law right to her children and property. Hence, they must have the rights to property, inheritance and custody. The woman, according to Mill was worse than a slave, a "personal body-servant of a despot for her husband may compel her, claim from her and enforce the lowest degradation of a human being, that of being made the instrument of an animal function contrary to her inclinations" (Mill ibid: 250). The law also granted the husband rather than the wife the right over her children. A mother did not become a legal guardian of her children in the event of the death of their father, unless expressly desired in the will of the deceased. If a wife decided to leave her husband, she could not claim anything, including her children. Mill pleaded, therefore, for equality of the sexes before the law, for that was crucial to ensuring a just arrangement. This, he felt, would be beneficial to all. Here he made an interesting point, that normally institutions such as slavery, political absolutism or the autocracy of the head of the family were judged by giving the *best examples in their support*, as the purpose of the law and institutions was not for good, but for bad persons. Moreover, any good law should take into account domestic oppression and personal violence, considering the high incidence of such crimes. The only option was that

> ... the equality of married persons before the law, is not only the sole mode in which that particular relation can be made consistent with justice to both sides, and conducive to the happiness of both, but it is the only means of rendering the daily life of mankind, in any high sense a school of moral cultivations.

A marriage contract based on equality of married persons before law was not only a sufficient, but a necessary condition for full and just equality between the sexes. For Mill, equality was a genuine moral sentiment that ought to govern all relationships, including the marital one. Such a sentiment could be instilled and nurtured within a family that had been justly constituted. Mill acknowledged the family as the real school for learning the virtues of freedom and liberation, yet it was here that sentiments of injustice, inequality and despotism were taught. The boy, by virtue of being a male, was treated and reared as if he was superior and better, thus dismissing the needs and interests of one-half of humankind to bear the consequences of subordination and inhumanness. The self-

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worship of the male in a traditional family, described by Mill as a school of despotism, was contrary to the modern principles of individuals being respected for what they *did*, rather than what they *were*.

A just family would nurture feelings of sympathy in equality and love, rather than subordination and command. Mill desired a transformation of the family to suit the temperament and spirit of the modern age, namely the spirit of equality and justice, and in the process bring about a moral regeneration of humankind. The relationship between a man and a woman in marriage should be based on mutual respect and mutual love, giving due regard to one another's rights. This would make them self-reliant and self-sufficient. Unless the equal and just worth of every human being was recognized, he could not enjoy equal rights nor realize his full potential. A life of rational freedom devoted to the release of their full creative potential was as much a requirement for men as for women.

> Mill's essay emphasizes the value of non-instrumental relationships in human life. His depictions of both corrupt and well ordered marriage trace the relationship of family to right political order. His vision of marriage as a locus of mutual sympathy and understanding between autonomous adults stands as an unrealized goal for those who believe that the liberation of women requires not only formal equality of opportunity but measures which will enable couples to live in genuine equality, mutuality and reciprocity.

Mill argued that men should not be trusted with absolute power. Such absolute power within the family and marriage only led to brutalization of women. He denied the need of one having the power of decision making within the voluntary association between two persons, and cited the example of commercial partnerships. In matters where quick decisions were needed, it would make sense to have division of power, but one that involved changes of system or principles would need the consent of both parties. The division of affairs for practical purposes would depend on the *comparative qualifications of the couple. The man had an advantage*, being the older of the two, the breadwinner and provider of his family. In spite of his insistence on the need to restructure family relationships based on equity and fairness, Mill continued to perceive the family as one where a man earned the family income, and a woman would take care of domestic affairs.

Eisenstein (1986) noted that Mill reiterated the conventional assumptions about the woman's role in a patriarchal family. In bearing and rearing children, the woman contributed more to the household and its common life. In *addition* to these chores, if she went out and worked, it would impair the proper discharge of these functions. *The Subjection* toned down the assertions made by Mill in 1832 that in the absence of servants at home, women would do all the work that a servant would have done if there was one and at the same time be a mother and a natural teacher to her children. Moreover, if the woman was well-protected and enjoyed an equal status within marriage, she would not feel the need to labour outside her home, for when she married she chose a profession, that of managing her home and bringing up her children.

> Like a man when he chooses a profession, so, when a woman marries, it may in general be understood that she makes choice of the management of a household and the bringing up of a family, as the first call upon her exertions, during as many years of her life as may be required for the purpose; and that she renounces, not all other objects and occupations, but all which are not consistent with the requirements of this (Mill 1985: 289).

Mill was also convinced that if suitable domestic help was made possible, then women, and in particular the talented and exceptional ones, could take up a profession or a vocation. A married woman would have full right in her property and earning. She would have the right to enter a profession or take up a career. Women, he pointed out, were fully capable of becoming business partners, philosophers, politicians and scientists.

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Did u know? Like Wollstonecraft and Fuller, Mill argued that *the dignity of a woman was guaranteed if she had the power of earning her own living*.

Mill has been criticized for recommending that women continue being confined within the family and home, which implied that they would not be able to develop the sense of justice to sustain public spirit, and continue to be selfish and narrow in their outlooks (Kramnick 1982: 68; Pateman 1987: 27; Tulloch 1989: 27). In this perception, he could not transcend the nineteenth-century image of women as primarily homemakers and mothers. His focus was also restricted only to middle-class women.

Mill questioned the Lockeian separation of paternal and political power, and raised the larger question about the status of the family. He treated the family as a conventional rather than as a natural institution, yet he did not regard the family as political. In *On Liberty*, he solved the private-public divide and suggested personal judgement as a solution, but did not tackle the other important public-private dichotomy of the family versus the civil sphere (Tulloch 1989: 8).

Mill's position got further reinforced by his emphasis on the inherent incompleteness of mid-nineteenth-century England in particular, and Europe in general, because of the exclusion of women from the public realm, which made his position very similar to that of Paine, who highlighted the hollowness of British democracy at the end of the eighteenth century because of the exclusion of the majority of the people from the political process.

> *The Subjection of Women*, challenged much more than Victorian decorum, however, it was a radical challenge to one of the most fundamental and precariously held assumptions about marriage in the modern era, which is that it was a relationship grounded on the consent of the partners to join their lives. Mill argues to the contrary that the presumed consent given to women to marry is not, in any real sense, a free promise, but one socially coerced for the lack of meaningful options (Shanley and Pateman 1991: 168).

In the *Principles of Political Economy*, Mill argued that women received low wages because of the prejudices of society, thereby making them appendages of men and giving the latter a greater share of "whatever belongs to both". The second reason for low wages was surplus female labour for unskilled jobs. Both law and custom prohibited women from seeking any means of livelihood, other than being a mother and wife.

Mill pointed out that if women were allowed to exercise their faculties freely and fully, the real beneficiary would be society, for it would be able to draw from a larger pool of mental resources. If women were properly educated it would not only brighten their dull and impoverished lives, but also enhance society in general. He understood the important point that *equal opportunities in education* meant equal opportunities in employment. If women were denied the latter, it was because men could not think of them as equals, and only desired to confine them to their domestic chores. He also pleaded for political rights to vote and to participate in government as administrators and as rulers.

In the *Representative Government*, Mill commented that difference of sex could not be the basis of political rights. Citing examples like Joan of Arc, Elizabeth and Margaret of Austria, he argued that these women and others had proved that women were as competent as men to participate and manage political offices. In granting the right to vote, Mill hoped that women would be able to bring about legislation to remedy domestic violence. He objected to women being prevented by law to compete and contribute to society. He desired that the subjection of women be ended not merely by law alone, but by education, opinion, habits, and finally a change in family life itself.

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In the *Principles*, Mill observed the need to open industrial occupations freely to both sexes, but a shortcoming of *The Subjection* was the neglect of the question of how women of all classes could find and keep their jobs. Mill failed to address the problems of women in the market place and as part of the labour force. Mill's concern was with the removal of the legal barriers erected by patriarchy that prevented the possibilities of a compassionate and interdependent relationship between a husband and wife, ensuring political equality for both men and women in the political sphere. At that time, skilled female labour in the market place was still a remote possibility, whereas suffrage was the burning issue. The question of whether to grant women the right to vote and citizenship was linked to their subordinate and inferior status—a prejudice that Mill felt was imperative to confront and combat.

Many of Mill's contemporaries acknowledged his importance because of his eminence, but did not regard him their leader, for in their opinion he had ignored the plight of daughters, sisters or single women living alone or under the parental roof in *The Subjection*. His focus was on the wife and mother. Most Victorian Feminists voiced concern about the status and problems of single women. They focused on the problems that daughters faced, a relationship that all women shared and the most crucial problem in a society that did not give them independence. This seemed an appropriate framework for discussing the power of fathers and in delineating the basis of patriarchy.

However, the scope of *The Subjection* was much more wide than alleged by the Victorian Feminists, for Mill did see the plight of single women in a society that gave undue importance to marriage. This was clear from his concern and description of Eleanor Garrett, who was denied the opportunities of leading a decent, independent life. The solution, according to him, was in giving freedom of choice to women, whether married or single. He could perceive clearly that the problems women faced were not merely those of misconception or false social notions, but of *systematic domination*, which was why he constantly used the language of justice, freedom and slavery to improve their lot.

Mill defended the right of individual women who wanted the opportunity to choose a life other than that of motherhood and marriage. He did believe that most women would not make that choice, but he certainly did not want *to force* women into marriage by not offering them alternatives. He also defended the right of exceptional women to have their freedom of choice, and to make the home a dignified and honourable place for those who preferred domestic work. He believed that ordinary men and women were slaves to custom, and it was necessary to remove the legal barriers which restricted women's opportunities.

Self-Assessment

1. The subjection of women is the title of an essay written in ..... .
   (*i*) 1869 (*ii*) 1858 (*iii*) 1867 (*iv*) 1871
2. History of British India was published in ..... .
   (*i*) 1818 (*ii*) 1819 (*iii*) 1820 (*iv*) 1817
3. Mill's system of logic was completed in ..... .
   (*i*) 1842 (*ii*) 1843 (*iii*) 1841 (*iv*) 1843
4. Mill pointed out that every human action has ..... aspects.
   (*i*) moral aspect (*ii*) aesthetic aspect
   (*iii*) sympathetic aspect (*iv*) All of these.

13.5 Summary

- Mill's efforts to revise and modify classical Utilitarianism by emphasizing the social aspect of the individual, the need to assess happiness both quantitatively and qualitatively, stating

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that liberty and not happiness was the chief end of the state, and defining happiness to include liberty, individuality, self-development and self-control, paved the way for many of the changes that were initiated within English political thought and practice. His most important concern was the preservation of liberty within a democratic society as an intrinsic good in itself, and looked down on majority tyranny and mass mediocrity as potent threats to individuality and liberty. By making liberty the chief aim and objective of the state, he established the limits of legitimate interference by society and the state in areas that strictly and exclusively belonged to the individual. He categorically demarcated things that belonged to Caesar, and the things that did *not* belong to Caesar.

- The early Utilitarians in general and Bentham in particular, were concerned with the ascendancy of political democracy as a complement to the Industrial Revolution. The Reform Bill of 1832 was seen as securing a good government. Mill perceived the dangers inherent in such an extension : the tyranny of opinion and prejudices, the will of the majority overriding individuality and minority perceptions. He was no longer concerned about the suppression that authoritarianism resorted to. Instead, it was the preservation of individual and minority rights against the democratic state and public opinion. He could foresee the dangers inherent in *laissez faire* commercialism. It was not just the freedom to do as one pleased or willed, but freedom of thought, to think differently (Williams 1958: 71-72). In spite of his passionate advocacy of individuality and liberty for all including the eccentric, Mill remained intellectually an elitist.
- Mill, like Coleridge and Burke, regarded cultivation of culture as social and emphasized on the need for institutions that would conform and constitute the individual's personal needs. Applying this framework, he argued that :
- A philosophy like Bentham's ... can teach the means of organizing and regulating the merely *business* part of the social arrangements ... . It will do nothing (except sometimes) as an instrument in the hands of a higher doctrine for the spiritual interests of society; nor does it suffice of itself even for the material interests ... . All he can do is but to indicate means by which, in any given state of the national mind, the material interests of society can be protected; saving the question, of which others must judge, whether the use of those means would have, on the national character, any injurious influence.
- Mill visualized the state as a moral institution concerned with the promotion of virtue and excellence in the individual citizen. He felt that a conception of good life was more important than a life devoted to the pursuit of pleasure. He pleaded for the removal of obstacles in the way of the individual's self-development that made life less mean and less intolerable for the masses. He, however, continued to see the state as a product of wills, though not of interests, and contended that to ignore the state as constituted by human wills was fallacious.
- Mill was essentially a critic of the complacency and conventions of Victorian English society, as evident from his three main tracts, *On Liberty, Representative Government*, and *The Subjection of Women*. Following the spirit of optimism of the Enlightenment era, he accepted the notion of progressive advancement of human civilization that the theorists of this period espoused. Since an individual did not develop in isolation, for the flowering of a vibrant culture, healthy discourse, diversity and a concern for public affairs, liberty of expression assumed special significance.
- Mill was the first male philosopher of considerable stature and repute to consider the "Woman's Question". Mainstream thinkers had either ignored it altogether, or written about women and the role of the family *en passant*, usually endorsing the stereotype image of the woman. *The Subjection*, along with his active support for women's causes, played a pivotal role in advancing the women's movement. He integrated the central themes raised in the tract with his overall political philosophy. The tract raised many issues of continuing relevance to women, namely the alleged differences between men and women, sexual division of

labour, the family as an instrument of change, equality and self-worth in family and sexual relationships, freedom of choice for women, and the reasons for women's subordination and oppression. Mill was the first to apply public principles of justice and equality to the private realm of the family, which he characterized as a "sympathetic association" and the very foundation of a just and equitable society. Being an association of equals, it had to reflect true equality.

- In the *Principles*, Mill clearly stated that for ending sex and class oppression, paternalistic structures had to be replaced by responsible self-governments. Paternalism, for Mill, was illicit and pre-modern. He was sure of the benefits of public involvement, and rightly pointed out that women languishing in privacy threatened the very spirit of public integrity. Equality within the family would lead to a better and responsible society. It would also eliminate the evils of an hierarchical, patriarchal family system, like selfishness, domination, injustice, unfairness and male-centredness, and contribute to a better and proper development of children. Mill, like Wollstonecraft, rejected the natural distinction between men and women and dismissed women's nature as an artificial thing, a product of what he described as "forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulations in others". He perceived the subjection of women as a conspiracy hatched by men to keep them ignorant and subordinate.

13.6 Key–Words

1. Utilitarianism : The doctrine that an action is right insofar as it promotes happiness, and that the greatest heppiness of the greatest number should be the guiding principle.
2. Individuality : The quality or character of a person or thing that distinguishes them from others of the same kind.

13.7 Review Questions

1. How does J.S. Mill justify equal rights for women?
2. What did Mill mean by the statement that the family in a school of despotism? Explain his claim that children who grew up in such families cannot be good democratic citizens.
3. How would you change between a natural rights and a utilitarian defence of individual liberty?
4. What is the defence of individual freedom by Mill? Discuss.

13.8 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.

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Unit 14: John Stuart Mill and His Representative Government

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to :

- Discuss democracy and representative government of Mill.
- Explain Mill's economy and state.
- Understand Mill's views on India.

Introduction

Mill gave the greatest importance to freedom of thought. This was the most prized item in Mill's catalogue of freedoms where no outside (government or society) interference was to be tolerated. Mill gave four main reasons against interference with freedom of thought. Firstly, assuming our own infallibility, we may suppress an opinion which may be wholly true. Secondly, even if the opinion suppressed is partly erroneous, it is not desirable on our part to suppress the error because it might have elements of truth. Thirdly, even if the opinion suppressed is wholly untrue, still we would be the losers for suppressing it, because its suppression would prevent the people from realising the rational grounds on which the true opinion is based. The true opinion gets strengthened when contested again and again. Finally, Mill says: "It is only by the collision of adverse opinion that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied".

Mill's prime concern with delimiting a zone of noninterference stems from his deep concern for human individuality. The human being, according to Mill, is akin to a tree which "grows according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing".

But Mill is careful enough to note that individuality cannot be allowed to flourish if it hurts or harms the interests (equal right of developing individuality) of others. In other words, Mill does not permit the promotion of individuality at the expense of harming others or hurting society. To put it differently, individuality is a highly desirable goal, but so is social harmony and social good.

Mill's concept of negative liberty thus enables him to permit imposition of restraints in the interest of the common weal, that is, when actions are no longer purely self-regarding. To illustrate, man has full freedom of thought and expression but (says Mill) "opinions lose their immunity, when the circumstances in which they are expressed are such as to constitute by their expression a positive instigation to some mischievous act". Here the conduct of a self-regarding action has social repercussions and hence the state acquires the right to intervene.

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14.1 Democracy and Representative Government

Mill regarded representative democracy as necessary for progress, as it permitted citizens to use and develop their faculties fully. It promoted virtue, intelligence and excellence (Mill 1976: 193-195). It also allowed the education of the citizens, providing "an efficient forum for conducting the collective affairs of the community" (Mill ibid: 196). Interaction between individuals in a democracy ensured the possibility of the emergence of the wisest and recognition of the best leaders. It encouraged free discussion, which was necessary for the emergence of the truth. He judged representative democracy on the basis of how far it, "promotes the good management of the affairs of the society by means of the existing faculties, moral, intellectual and active, of its various members and by 'improving' those faculties" (Mill ibid: 208).

Mill tried to reconcile the principle of political equality with individual freedom (Hacker 1961: 573). He accepted that all citizens, regardless of their status, were equal and that only popular sovereignty could give legitimacy to the government. Democracy was good because it made people happier and better.

Mill laid down several conditions for representative government. First, such a government could only function with citizens who were of an "active, self-helping character". Backward civilizations, where citizens were primarily passive, would hardly be able to run a representative democracy. Second, citizens had to show their ability and willingness to preserve institutions of representative democracy.

Influenced by de Tocqueville's thesis on majority tyranny, Mill advocated a liberal democracy which specified and limited the powers of legally elected majorities by cataloguing and protecting individual rights against the majority. He pleaded for balancing the numerical majority in a democracy by adjusting franchise. Even though he advocated universal adult franchise in 1859, he remarked in 1861: "I regard it as wholly inadmissible that any person should participate in the suffrage without being able to read, write, and I will add, perform the operations of arithmetic".

Mill prescribed registration tests for checking performances, universal education for all children and plurality of votes to the better educated, in order to balance the lack of voting rights to the uneducated. "No one but a fool, and only a fool of a peculiar description, feels offended by the acknowledgement that there are others whose opinion, and even whose wish, is entitled to a greater amount of consideration than his".

Mill also recommended the disqualification of three other categories of dependants : (1) those unable to pay local taxes; (2) those dependent on public welfare would be excluded for five years from the last day of receipt, for "by becoming dependent on the remaining members of the community for actual subsistence, he abdicates his claim to equal rights with them in other respects" (Mill ibid: 282) and (3) legal bankrupts and moral deviants like habitual drunkards. He, however, championed equal voting rights for all irrespective of their sex or colour.

Mill looked upon equal voting rights, universal suffrage, democracy and liberty as conditionally good. They had to be conferred only on those who had the character for self-control, and the ability and interest in using them for the public good. The policy of a government in franchise reform should be

> to make participation in political rights the reward for mental improvement... . I do not look upon equal voting as among the things which are good in themselves, provided they can be guarded against inconveniences. I look upon it as only relatively good, less objectionable than inequality of privilege.

Mill also recommended open rather than secret ballot, for voting was a public trust which "should be performed under the eye and criticism of the public" (Mill ibid: 286). Open voting would be less dangerous, for the individual voter would be less influenced by the "sinister interests and discreditable feelings which belong to himself, either individually or as a member of a class" .

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Mill believed that citizens developed intellectual qualities of reason and judgement only through political participation. "Civil participation enhances autonomy and altruism : autonomy from self-government; altruism from judging the interests of the community" (Heater 1990: 199). This enabled the participant to attain moral maturity, for when an individual undertook a public action, he felt that "not only the common weal is his weal, but that it partly depends on his exertions". People had to be free to be able to participate in the government of their country, the management of their workplace and to act as bulwarks against the autocracy of modern day bureaucracy. This feeling of belonging to a community could only come about if all were granted the right to vote. He did worry about the consequences of absolute equality that universal adult franchise entailed, namely the trampling of a wise and educated minority by the mass of people. He recommended compulsory elementary education, for that would make individual citizens wise, competent and independent judges. In *On Liberty* Mill recommended education to be established and controlled by the state. In the nineteenth century liberal thinkers relied on state intervention to reduce the dominance of the church and to protect the right to education of children against their own parents but also warned against the dangers of too much state involvement in education. He always emphasized that representative democracy was only possible in a state that was small and homogeneous, an assertion that has been nullified by the success of plural democracies like India.

Through the rights of citizenship an individual became a social person. He acquired both political freedom and responsibility. It was for this concern with the public realm that Mill defended women's civil and political rights. It also constituted one of his major contributions, considering that the argument for the public domain became central to Rawls' theory in *Political Liberalism* (1993).

14.2 Economy and State

Mill deviated from the classical economic theory of *laissez faire* and advocated "optional" areas of interference. Other than gender equality, Mill tried to accommodate the other major intellectual streams in Europe within Liberalism, namely Socialism. He realized that unless Liberalism adapted itself to changing times, it would not be able to sustain itself. It was to Mill's credit that he brought about this change without giving up the fundamentals of Liberalism. Interestingly, his *Principles* were published in the same year as Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (1848).

The *Principles* reiterated the principles of Ricardian political economy. In the process, Mill simplified Ricardian economics, making it less deterministic. Second, he preferred *laissez faire*, as a principle, to state intervention in matters of social and economic policy. Third, his acceptance of socialism was within the overall framework of a market economy .

Did u know? Conservatives are not necessarily stupid, but most stupid people are conservatives.

The shift in Mill's position was prompted by revolutions in Europe in the 1840s, the Irish famine and the efforts of working men's organizations to improve their wages and conditions of work in the 1870s. Mill viewed the Irish famine and the emigration of population as a result of the systems of hereditary ownership and absentee landlord farming. Hence, he proposed curtailment of the normal right of inheritance and compulsory redistribution of large holdings from absentee landlords to local peasants, for they would then become efficient cultivators. He recommended interference in the market not with the purpose of overruling "the judgement of individuals but to give effect to it" (Mill 1902: 560). He also supported limiting of working hours, state control of monopolies and factory legislation for children.

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Mill visualized society as composed of free, equal, independent and virtuous citizens, who contributed their best towards the common good and would in turn receive fair rewards for their contributions. He rejected the hereditary class system, because it was inherently inefficient and obstructed progress. Mill diluted the distinction between the three social classes in the Ricardian system. He did not attack the landowning class for receiving a steady increase in rent, while the capitalist faced diminishing returns and the labourer survived at the bare level of subsistence, a point picked by George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) later to furnish the economic basis of Fabian Socialism. Mill was critical of idleness and opulence, just as his father was, and attacked the conspicuous consumption of the new middle class in the same way as he castigated the old aristocracy. As opposed to the big bourgeois, he praised the small, landed proprietors for he learnt of their importance from Tocqueville as preservers of American democracy.

Mill insisted that while increased production was important for poor countries, it was *better distribution of existing wealth* that mattered in advanced ones. He visualized a happy society as one that consisted of

> a well paid and affluent body of labourers; no enormous fortunes, except what were earned and accumulated during a single lifetime; but a much larger body of persons than at present, not only exempt from the coarser toils, but with sufficient leisure, both physical and mental, from mechanical details, to cultivate freely the graces of life, and afford examples of them to the classes less favourable circumstances for their growth (Mill 1963: 755).

Mill advocated taxing inheritance above a modest level, rather than industry and the economy, for that would curtail the incentive to work harder and save more than his peers. In case of intestacy or property without a legal will, it would revert to the state after providing enough for the descendants. He opposed taxation on investments, for that would harm those who could not work, and for whose security it was started. He did not like taxing incomes and savings simultaneously, for that would undercut the willingness of those who kept a portion of their money for productive investments, by which wealth was created and "distributed in wages among the poor" (Mill ibid: 816). While he desired to preserve the entrepreneurship of the bourgeois, he attacked the landed aristocracy which grew wealthy "without working, risking or economizing" (Mill ibid: 819-820). It was for this reason that he was against primogeniture. Thus, Mill combined both a production and a distribution view of economics.

In general, Mill believed that the policy of *laissez faire* was the ideal, but it could be set aside for the purposes of education, care of children and the insane, planned colonization, relief for poor, public utilities like water and regulation of hours of work. The state would ensure that none starved. He did not advocate abolition of property or its equalization. He desired general *embourgeoisement* so that everyone worked for a living, enjoyed a decent standard of living and had sufficient leisure to cultivate one's mind.

Mill's "socialism" was essentially libertarian, for it aimed at the full development of the individual's faculties and the liberation of the human potential. "The aim of improvement should be not solely to place human beings in a condition of which they will be able to do without one another but to enable them to work with or for one another in relations not involving dependence".

Mill was attracted to socialism because of its idea of human cooperation or partnership, but he was equally keen to preserve individuality and freedom. He did not advocate socialization of the means of production. He realized the need to change capitalism by bringing in the ethic of social welfare and cooperation. This was because capitalism, even with the incentive of self-interest, had not been able to eliminate parasitism, for those unwilling to work were able to develop ways to shirk work. Socialism with communal ownership had superior methods, which forced lazy members to produce and work. The difference was that in a capitalist society a employer could dismiss a lazy worker, but in a socialist society he could be reformed by public opinion, which to Mill was

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the "most universal and one of the strongest methods of control". However, he was aware of potential tyranny within a socialist society, for he rejected all forms of paternalism as anti-progressive. He supported local workers, retail cooperatives and schemes of sharing profits between workers and managers, and other workers' savings, investment and insurance schemes. He cautioned that these schemes, however beneficial to the larger community, should not "dispense with the inducements of private interests in social affairs". This was because there was no substitute for them, nor could one be provided.

Mill, therefore, could be classified as an "unrepentant defender of the *laissez faire* system of the economy and a radical libertarian in his efforts to extend its practice and benefits from capitalist employers and the self-employed to all peasant and industrial workers". In 1866-1867, he was prepared to serve as a bridge between Gladstonian parliamentary liberalism and working-class causes. He described socialism as educative, but was not hopeful of its success. He classified socialist perception in two distinct categories : (*a*) a vision of a new society based on free association of small self-governing units; and (*b*) a more drastic scheme of managing the total productive resources under a centralized authority. He favoured the first model, mistakenly attributing the second to continental Europe. However, both these trends characterized British socialist thought.

Mill's advocacy of the participation of workers in management and the need for just apportionment in the ownership of property, one that united him with the Socialists of his time, had twofold implications for his views on citizenship. First, it was just that the industrious should be compensated for their contributions to the well-being of society; by not merely making them part of the body politic, but also granting them economic benefits. This view has been reiterated and refined by Rawls, who viewed productive capacities as social assets, but insisted on granting incentives to the well-off to secure efficiency and productivity. Rawls ruled out rewards if they were unearned. This was necessary if the difference principle had to be meaningfully implemented, so that not only was the worst off elevated, but also the interests of the well-off protected. Second, it was through participation, whether in running a factory or workshop or government, that an individual learnt to exercise his judgement and work for the common good. Judgement required thought, considerations of common good required altruism, and participation did away with lethargy.

Mill contended that trade unions not only restored bargaining power between the workers and the captains of industry, but also ensured just and orderly economic development. He was against making membership within trade unions compulsory. Nor did he believe in prohibiting the right to strike.

In 1869, Mill began a book on Socialism, which remained incomplete. He expressed the need to reform the existing property laws, so that everyone could share its benefits. He disliked the exploitation that private property entailed, but was more perturbed by the uniformity that Socialism/ Communism enforced. He did not think that Socialism would solve the problems that capitalism faced. Moreover, capitalism, far from increasing misery and injustice, decreased them in the long run. He was convinced that Socialism would run into a dead end if it renounced its liberal heritage and supported an all-powerful state. He alluded to the problem of maintaining property rights within Socialism. He also warned against the submersion of individuality within Socialism.

> Already in all societies the compression of individuality by the majority is a great and growing evil; it would probably be much greater under Communism, except so far as it might be in the power of individuals to set bounds to it by selecting to belong to a community of persons like-minded with themselves.

For Mill, Socialism prevented the proponents of *laissez faire* and the free market from becoming complacent. It remained, for him, a set of arguments and was not a viable potent political force. His views on Socialism were formed by reading Blanc, Fourier, Owen and Saint Simon, rather

than Marx and Engels. He presided over the relative merits and demerits of Socialism and capitalism like a referee in a heavyweight boxing context (Thomas 1985: 90).

14.3 Mill's Views on India

Mill's *Autobiography* and his private letters indicated that he looked upon his Indian duties as essentially belonging to his official employment, rather than of personal interest. He wrote very little about India, and was influenced by his father's pessimistic views on Indian culture. He was skeptical, like Comte and the Saint Simonians, about the feasibility and success of representative governments in Asia, including India. The reason was the passivity of its people, which was due to centuries of despotism, preventing them from taking an active posture in the public sphere. While he conceded that Asian countries such as China and India had attained (in the earlier ages) high standards of civilization, presently they were dominated by custom and sufficiently unresponsive to the stimulating ideas of individualism and rationalism. This made Eastern societies essentially passive and stagnant, making it difficult for them to progress on their own volition. There is very little difference between a liberal Mill, an idealist Hegel and a socialist Marx, when it came to writing and perceiving the non-European world. All of them remained Eurocentric.

Mill felt that some form of benevolent despotism or rule by a superior people belonging to an advanced society was best suited for India. At the same time, he had reservations about the capacity of a foreign government to act in the best interests of its subjects, especially in the case of India where the British had very little understanding of their subjects, or sympathy for them. In such a situation, it would be better for the rulers to "govern through" a delegated body which would give supreme importance to the best interests of the subject people. Mill's position was very different from the one articulated by Indian reformers. Rammohun had already rejected the idea of a delegated body, and insisted that the British Parliament enact laws for India since Indian society was incapable of changing from within. He defended his view by pointing out that, unlike the West, where the law emerged from a sovereign authority because of the separation of legislative and executive powers, in India all the powers were vested with the executive, which deterred progressive and wholesome legislation. He was sanguine that the British Parliament would have permanent interests which would benefit India. Rammohun's arguments seemed more reasonable and convincing than Mill's.

Mill, like Burke, was opposed to any kind of interference with religious practices in India, though these were abhorrent to humanity in general. He was against the official imposition of the English language and culture, though he regarded it as the duty of the Empire to uproot barbarous practices like infanticide slavery and *sati*. He supported legal reforms in India like the Indian Penal Code and the codes for civil and criminal procedure. Though an ardent champion of educational reforms in India, he was critical of the education policy that was adopted in 1835 by Lord Bentinck and Lord Macaulay. The policy decision to withdraw funds from centres of oriental learning implied a rejection of Indian culture and religion, and that was unacceptable. Mill distinguished between a limited plan of funding colleges to teach English to potential government employees, and the more fundamental idea of spreading Western ideas and knowledge throughout the country. The second could be achieved by disseminating Western ideas through Indian, rather than foreign languages, with the help of the Indian educated class for the masses to understand and learn.

Mill and Harriet championed the cause of European, and in particular Victorian women, but felt that Asian women were not ready for equality, individuality and liberty yet. Mill, even on this score, was Eurocentric. He was willing to use different standards for judging similar practices, particularly on an issue like gender equality, which was close to his heart since the 1860s.

In fact Bankim abandoned the idea of dissecting the issue, for Mill had stated the case coherently and brilliantly. This in itself was a great tribute, considering Bankim's *Samya* (1879) analyzed the question of inequality in society.

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Mill's plea for gender equality was appreciated by Bankim, who felt that there was no need to add anything to what was stated in *The Subjection*, except the fact that Indian women faced "one hundredth degree more of subjugation" than their European counterparts.

Self-Assessment

1. Mill advocated universal adult franchise in ..... .
   (*i*) 1859 (*ii*) 1850 (*iii*) 1858 (*iv*) 1860
2. Stuart Mill visualized society as composed of ..... citizens.
   (*i*) Free (*ii*) Equal and independent
   (*iii*) Virtuous (*iv*) All of these
3. Mill started writing a book on socialism, which remained incomplete, in ..... .
   (*i*) 1869 (*ii*) 1870 (*iii*) 1865 (*iv*) 1868
4. 'Samya' was written by
   (*i*) Bankim (*ii*) Mill (*iii*) Macaulay (*iv*) None of these.

14.4 Summary

- Mill was convinced that a good society was one which consisted of happy people, and happiness came out of self-reliance, rationality, tolerance, wide-ranging interests and a compassionate temper. For Mill, "coercion is logically at odds with the creation of such a character". Self-development and moral progress were instrumental to such a good life, leading to "the establishment of the life of the individual as a work of art". This was only possible where coercion, in the name of either class or gender, was eliminated, if not minimized. Mill, the rationalist and the Utilitarian, was also the philosopher of human liberation, individuality, equality and fulfilment.
- Mill accepted the Industrial Revolution, for it produced a class of energetic and acquisitive entrepreneurs with the sole aim of the profit motive and the accumulation of money. He feared mass democracy because of its collective mediocrity, which would destroy higher civilization. He was fearful of mass conformity and the effect it would have on individual freedom. He favoured a society based on just meritocracy. He was not appreciative of the destruction unleashed by the French Revolution, though he was happy at the decimation of the monarchy and nobility, and at the reduction of the influence and role of the Church. He assigned an important role to the intellectual elite in shaping and making the attitudes and beliefs in a society, particularly in times of transition. He also insisted on the need to correlate political institutions with society.
- Mill distinguished between the public sphere of law and the private sphere of morality, and the need to guarantee by law basic human freedoms. He also established the relationship between law and liberty, whereby law as a system maximized liberty, namely self-development. He clearly saw the need to establish a large ambit of freedom, while emphasizing some restraints, both as a condition of social life, and for protecting freedom itself. He was not indifferent to conduct that fell short of accepted standards of private morality. He also advocated proportional representation as a device to protect the rights of the minorities, giving them an opportunity to share power. He championed the right to express one's opinion, it being immaterial whether one was right or wrong. The important thing was free expression and articulation of contesting opinions. He refined and developed Voltaire's defence of free

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speech and toleration, immortalized by his famous dictum, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

- Mill welcomed the idea of socialism winning over private property, but it would have to be a socialism that respected individuality. He wanted the most people to enjoy property, and for this he insisted on restricting the rights of inheritance, limiting the size of the population and increasing the quality and quantity of education.
- Mill was also convinced that advancement of democracy would depend on the spread of education and schooling. Following Rousseau, he advocated participation in public affairs as a means of counter balancing human selfish-ness. Participation maximized responsibility. But for his father, participation minimized oppression. John Stuart's entire focus was on enlarging participation and the individual's freedom of choice.
- Participation was integral to political education. An educated citizenry was vital to the creation and perpetuation of a healthy body politic. The expansive ideal of citizenship inculcated by Mill put a premium on a widely diffused energy, virtue and intelligence. The achievement of a higher politics required, among other things, opportunities for personal growth, which entailed bringing more and better schooling, more civic participation, more material benefits, and more beauty within the reach of more and more people .... Political development, personal growth, and an increase in the total sum of human happiness were to advance together.
- Mill applied liberal principles not only in the public sphere but also in the private realm, and was the only philosopher to emphasize the importance of fairness, equality and independence within the family as well as within the state. He also insisted that the state had to grant the means of self-protection to its people. Towards this end, he advocated women's enfranchisement, quality elementary education for the masses and land reforms for agricultural labourers. A liberal state had the duty to empower the disadvantaged and the dispossessed. Mill humanized and broadened the ambit of liberalism, which made possible its subsequent revision by Green with his doctrine of Common Good.

14.5 Key–Words

1. Laissez : the theory or system of government that upholds the autonomous character of the economic order believing that government should intervene as little as possible in the direction of economic affairs.
2. Samya : equality
3. Intuitionist : The theory that truth or certain truths are known by intuition rather than reason.

14.6 Review Questions

1. Write a short note on J.S. Mill views on representative government.
2. How does Mill attempt to subsume justice and rights under the concept of utility ? What do you think of this attempt ?
3. Discuss Mill's view on India.

14.7 Further Readings

1. Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. 2004: A History of Political Thought, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
2. Mukhopadhyay, A.K. 1990 Western Political Thought, Calcutta - KP Bagchi and Company.