

Political Philosophy— A Journey between 19th Century to 20th Century

Ashok Kumar

Ph.D Scholar Education, Central University, Jant Pali Haryana

Abstract

Political Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction introduces the concepts of political philosophy – authority, democracy, freedom and its limits, justice, feminism, multiculturalism, and nationality. It asks such questions as: Is it really true that what governments do profoundly affects the quality of our lives? Do states need to be able to coerce their subjects if they are to have political authority? What role should ordinary citizens play in a democracy? It looks at the reasons why we need politics at all, the limitations of politics, and whether there are areas of life that shouldn't be governed by politics.

Keywords: Authority, civil Disobedience, democracy, Thomas Hobbes, human rights, justice, John Locke, need, political Philosophy, social contract, state of nature.

Introduction

Political philosophy, branch of philosophy that is concerned, at the most abstract level, with the concepts and arguments involved in political opinion. The meaning of the term *political* is itself one of the major problems of political philosophy. Broadly, however, one may characterize as political all those practices and institutions that are concerned with government.

The central problem of political philosophy is how to deploy or limit public power so as to maintain the survival and enhance the quality of human life. Like all aspects of human experience, political philosophy is conditioned by environment and by the scope and limitations of mind, and the answers given by successive political philosophers to perennial problems reflect the knowledge and the assumptions of their times. Political philosophy, as distinct from the study of political and administrative organization, is more theoretical and normative than descriptive. It is inevitably related to general philosophy and is itself a subject of cultural anthropology, sociology, and the sociology of knowledge. As a normative discipline it is thus concerned with what ought, on various assumptions, to be and how this purpose can be promoted, rather than with

a description of facts—although any realistic political theory is necessarily related to these facts. The political philosopher is thus not concerned so much, for example, with how pressure groups work or how, by various systems of voting, decisions are arrived at as with what the aims of the whole political process should be in the light of a particular philosophy of life.

There is thus a distinction between political philosophy, which reflects the world outlook of successive theorists and which demands an appreciation of their historical settings, and modern political science proper, which, insofar as it can be called a science, is empirical and descriptive. Political philosophy, however, is not merely unpractical speculation, though it may give rise to highly impractical myths: it is a vitally important aspect of life, and one that, for good or evil, has had decisive results on political action, for the assumptions on which political life is conducted clearly must influence what actually happens. Political philosophy may thus be viewed as one of the most important intellectual disciplines, for it sets standards of judgment and defines constructive purposes for the use of public power. Such consideration of the purposes for which power should be used is in a sense more urgent today than it was in earlier periods, for humankind has at its disposal the power either to create a world civilization in which modern technology can benefit the human race or to destroy itself in pursuit of political myths. The scope for political philosophy is thus great, the clarification of its purpose and limitations urgent—an aspect, indeed, of civilization's survival.

This article describes how these questions have been asked and answered by representative and influential political philosophers in the West, from Greco-Roman antiquity through the Middle Ages, early modern times, and the 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries. During so long a time span the historical context of these formulations has changed profoundly, and an understanding of the political philosophers selected demands some account of their background. Because of limitations of space, only political philosophers of outstanding importance have been at all fully described, although many minor figures also are briefly discussed.

Western Political Philosophy to the End of the 19th Century

Antiquity

Although in antiquity great civilizations arose in Egypt and Mesopotamia, in the Indus Valley, and in China, there was little speculation about the problems of political philosophy as formulated in the West. The Code of Hammurabi (c. 1750 BCE) consists of rules propounded by the Babylonian ruler Hammurabi as a representative of God on Earth and is mainly concerned with order, trade, and irrigation; the Maxims of Ptahhotep (c. 2300 BCE) contains shrewd advice from the Egyptian vizier on how to prosper in a bureaucracy; and the Artha-sastra of Kautilya, grand vizier to

Chandragupta Maurya in the late 4th century BCE, is a set of Machiavellian precepts on how to survive under an arbitrary power. To be sure, the Buddhist concept of dharma (social custom and duty), which inspired the Indian emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE, implies a moralization of public power, and the teachings of Confucius in the 6th century BCE are a code of conduct designed to stabilize society, but there is not, outside Europe, much speculation about the basis of political obligation and the purpose of the state, with both of which Western political philosophy is mainly concerned. An authoritarian society is taken for granted, backed by religious sanctions, and a conservative and arbitrary power is generally accepted.

In contrast to this overwhelming conservatism, paralleled by the rule of custom and tribal elders in most primitive societies, the political philosophers of Greece question the basis and purpose of government. Though they do not separate political speculation from shrewd observations that today would be regarded as empirical political, they created the vocabulary of Western political thought.

Plato

The first elaborate work of European political philosophy is the *Republic* of Plato, a masterpiece of insight and feeling, superbly expressed in dialogue form and probably meant for recitation. Further development of Plato's ideas is undertaken in his *Statesman* and *Laws*, the latter prescribing the ruthless methods whereby they might be imposed. Plato grew up during the Great War between Athens and Sparta and, like many political philosophers, tried to find remedies for prevalent political injustice and decline. Indeed, the *Republic* is the first of the utopias, though not one of the more attractive and it is the first classic attempt of a European philosopher to moralize political life:

Books V, VII-VIII, and IX of the *Republic* are cast as a lively discussion between Socrates, whose wisdom Plato is recounting, and various leisured Athenians. They *state the major themes of political philosophy with poetic power. Plato's work has been criticized as static and class-bound, reflecting the moral and aesthetic assumptions of an elite in a slave-owning civilization and bound by the narrow limits of the city-state (polis). The work is indeed a classic example of a philosopher's vivisection of society, imposing by relatively humane means the rule of a high-minded minority.*

The *Republic* is a criticism of current Hellenic politics – often an indictment. It is based upon a metaphysical act of faith, for Plato believes that a world of permanent Forms exists beyond the limitations of human experience and that morality and the good life, which the state should promote, are reflections of these ideal entities (see Platonism). The point is best made in the famous simile of the cave, in which humans are chained with their faces to the wall and their backs to the light, so that they see only the shadows of reality. So constrained, they shrink from what is truly “real” and permanent and need to be forced to face it. This idealistic doctrine, known misleadingly

a description of facts—although any realistic political theory is necessarily related to these facts. The political philosopher is thus not concerned so much, for example, with how pressure groups work or how, by various systems of voting, decisions are arrived at as with what the aims of the whole political process should be in the light of a particular philosophy of life.

There is thus a distinction between political philosophy, which reflects the world outlook of successive theorists and which demands an appreciation of their historical settings, and modern political science proper, which, insofar as it can be called a science, is empirical and descriptive. Political philosophy, however, is not merely unpractical speculation, though it may give rise to highly impractical myths: it is a vitally important aspect of life, and one that, for good or evil, has had decisive results on political action, for the assumptions on which political life is conducted clearly must influence what actually happens. Political philosophy may thus be viewed as one of the most important intellectual disciplines, for it sets standards of judgment and defines constructive purposes for the use of public power. Such consideration of the purposes for which power should be used is in a sense more urgent today than it was in earlier periods, for humankind has at its disposal the power either to create a world civilization in which modern technology can benefit the human race or to destroy itself in pursuit of political myths. The scope for political philosophy is thus great, the clarification of its purpose and limitations urgent—an aspect, indeed, of civilization's survival.

This article describes how these questions have been asked and answered by representative and influential political philosophers in the West, from Greco-Roman antiquity through the Middle Ages, early modern times, and the 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries. During so long a time span the historical context of these formulations has changed profoundly, and an understanding of the political philosophers selected demands some account of their background. Because of limitations of space, only political philosophers of outstanding importance have been at all fully described, although many minor figures also are briefly discussed.

Western Political Philosophy to the End of the 19th Century

Antiquity

Although in antiquity great civilizations arose in Egypt and Mesopotamia, in the Indus Valley, and in China, there was little speculation about the problems of political philosophy as formulated in the West. The Code of Hammurabi (c. 1750 BCE) consists of rules propounded by the Babylonian ruler Hammurabi as a representative of God on Earth and is mainly concerned with order, trade, and irrigation; the Maxims of Ptahhotep (c. 2300 BCE) contains shrewd advice from the Egyptian vizier on how to prosper in a bureaucracy; and the Artha-sastra of Kautilya, grand vizier to

Chandragupta Maurya in the late 4th century BCE, is a set of Machiavellian precepts on how to survive under an arbitrary power. To be sure, the Buddhist concept of dharma (social custom and duty), which inspired the Indian emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE, implies a moralization of public power, and the teachings of Confucius in the 6th century BCE are a code of conduct designed to stabilize society, but there is not, outside Europe, much speculation about the basis of political obligation and the purpose of the state, with both of which Western political philosophy is mainly concerned. An authoritarian society is taken for granted, backed by religious sanctions, and a conservative and arbitrary power is generally accepted.

In contrast to this overwhelming conservatism, paralleled by the rule of custom and tribal elders in most primitive societies, the political philosophers of Greece question the basis and purpose of government. Though they do not separate political speculation from shrewd observations that today would be regarded as empirical political, they created the vocabulary of Western political thought.

Plato

The first elaborate work of European political philosophy is the *Republic* of Plato, a masterpiece of insight and feeling, superbly expressed in dialogue form and probably meant for recitation. Further development of Plato's ideas is undertaken in his *Statesman* and *Laws*, the latter prescribing the ruthless methods whereby they might be imposed. Plato grew up during the Great War between Athens and Sparta and, like many political philosophers, tried to find remedies for prevalent political injustice and decline. Indeed, the *Republic* is the first of the utopias, though not one of the more attractive and it is the first classic attempt of a European philosopher to moralize political life.

Books V, VII-VIII, and IX of the *Republic* are cast as a lively discussion between Socrates, whose wisdom Plato is recounting, and various leisured Athenians. They state the major themes of political philosophy with poetic power. Plato's work has been criticized as static and class-bound, reflecting the moral and aesthetic assumptions of an elite in a slave-owning civilization and bound by the narrow limits of the city-state (polis). The work is indeed a classic example of a philosopher's vivisection of society, imposing by relatively humane means the rule of a high-minded minority.

The *Republic* is a criticism of current Hellenic politics – often an indictment. It is based upon a metaphysical act of faith, for Plato believes that a world of permanent Forms exists beyond the limitations of human experience and that morality and the good life, which the state should promote, are reflections of these ideal entities (see Platonism). The point is best made in the famous simile of the cave, in which humans are chained with their faces to the wall and their backs to the light, so that they see only the shadows of reality. So constrained, they shrink from what is truly "real" and permanent and need to be force to face it. This idealistic doctrine, known misleadingly

as realism, pervades all Plato's philosophy: its opposite doctrine, nominalism, declares that only particular and observed "named" data are accessible to the mind. On his realist assumption, Plato regards most ordinary life as illusion and the current evils of politics as the result of the human pursuit of brute instinct. It follows that:

unless *philosophers* bear kingly rule in cities or those who are now called kings and princes become genuine and adequate philosophers, and *political power* and philosophy are brought together...there will be no respite from evil for cities.

Only philosopher-statesmen can apprehend permanent and transcendent Forms and turn to "face the brightest blaze of being" outside the cave, and only philosophically minded people of action can be the saviours and helpers of the citizens.

Plato is thus indirectly the pioneer of modern beliefs that only a party organization, inspired by correct and "scientific" doctrines, formulated by the written word and interpreted by authority, can rightly guide the state. His rulers would form an elite, not responsible to the mass of the people. Thus, in spite of his high moral purpose, he has been called an enemy of the open society and the father of totalitarianism. But he is also an anatomist of the evils of unbridled appetite and political corruption and insists on the need to use public power to moral ends.

In the *Statesman* Plato admits that, although there is a correct science of government, like geometry it cannot be realized, and he stresses the need for the rule, since no ruler can be trusted with unbridled power. He then examines which of the current forms of government is the least difficult to live with, for the ruler, after all, is an artist who has to work within the limits of his medium. In the *Laws*, purporting to be a discussion of how best to found a polis in Crete, he presents a detailed program in which a state with some 5,000 citizens is ruled by 37 curators of laws and a council of 360. But the keystone of the arch is a sinister and secret Nocturnal Council to be "the sheet anchor of the state," established in its "central fortress as guardian." Poets and musicians will be discouraged and the young subjected to a rigid, austere, and exacting education. The stark consequence of Plato's political philosophy here becomes apparent. He had, nonetheless, stated, in the dawn of European political thought, the normative principle that the state should aim at promoting the good life and social harmony and that the rule of law, in the absence of the rule of philosopher-kings, is essential to this purpose.

Cicero and the Stoics

Both Plato and Aristotle had thought in terms of the city-state. But Aristotle's pupil Alexander swamped the cities of old Greece and brought them into a vast empire that included Egypt, Persia, and the Levant. Although city-states remained the locus of the civilization of antiquity, they became part of an imperial power that broke up into kingdoms under Alexander's successors. This imperial power was reasserted on an even greater scale by Rome, whose empire at its greatest extent reached from central

Scotland to the Euphrates and from Spain to eastern Anatolia. Civilization itself became identified with empire, and the development of eastern and Western Europe was conditioned by it.

Since the city-state was no longer self-sufficient, universal philosophies developed that gave people something to live by in a wider world. Of these philosophies, Stoicism and Epicureanism were the most influential. The former inspired a rather grim self-sufficiency and sense of duty, as exemplified by the writings of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius; the latter, a prudent withdrawal from the world of affairs.

St. Augustine

When Christianity became the predominant creed of the empire under Constantine (converted 312) and the sole official religion under Theodosius (379-395), political philosophy changed profoundly. St. Augustine's *City of God* (413-426/427), written when the empire was under attack by Germanic tribes, sums up and defines a new division between church and state and a conflict between "matter" and "spirit" resulting from original sin and the Fall of Man from the Garden of Eden.

St. Augustine, whose *Confessiones* (397) is a record of a new sort of introspection, combined a Classical and Hebraic dualism. From the Stoics and Virgil he inherited an austere sense of duty, from Plato and the Neoplatonists a contempt for the illusions of appetite, and from the Pauline and patristic interpretation of Christianity a sense of the conflict between Light and Darkness that reflects Zoroastrian and Manichaean doctrines emanating from Iran. In this context worldly interests and government itself are dwarfed by the importance of attaining salvation and of escaping from an astrologically determined fate and from the demons who embody the darkness. Life becomes illuminated for the elect minority by the prospect of eternal salvation or, for those without grace, shrivels under the glare of eternal fires.

St. Augustine regarded salvation as predestinate and the cosmic process as designed to "gather" an elect to fill the places of the fallen angels and so "preserve and perhaps augment the number of the heavenly inhabitants." The role of government and indeed of society itself becomes subordinated to a "secular arm," part of an earthly city, as opposed to the "City of God." The function of government is to keep order in a world intrinsically evil.

The Middle Ages

The decline of ancient civilization in the West was severe. Although technology continued to develop (the horse collar, the stirrup, and the heavy plow came in), intellectual pursuits, including political philosophy, became elementary. In the Byzantine Empire, on the other hand, committees of jurists working for the emperor Justinian (reigned 527-565) produced the *Codex constitutionum*; the *Digesta*, or *Pandectae*; the *Institutiones*, which defined and condensed Roman law; and the *Novellae*

constitutiones post codicem; the four books are collectively known as the *Codex Justinianus*, or *Code of Justinian*. The Byzantine basileus, or autocrat, had moral responsibility for guarding and harmonizing an elaborate state, a "colony" of heaven in which reason and not mere will ought to rule. This autocracy and the orthodox form of Christianity were inherited by the Christianized rulers of the Balkans, of Kievan Russia, and of Muscovy.

In the West, two essential principles of Hellenic and Christian political philosophy were transmitted, if only in elementary definitions, in rudimentary encyclopaedias. St. Isidore of Sevilla, in his 7th-century *Etymologiae* ("Etymologies"), for example, asserts that kings rule only on condition of doing right and that their rule reflects a Ciceronic law of nature "common to all people and mankind everywhere by natural instinct." Further, the Germanic tribes respected the civilization they took over and exploited; when converted, they revered the papacy. In 800 the Frankish ruler Charlemagne established a western European empire that would eventually be called holy and Roman (see Holy Roman Empire). The idea of a Christian empire coterminous with civilization thus survived in Western as well as Eastern Christendom.

John of Salisbury

After Augustine, no full-length speculative work of political philosophy appeared in the West until the *Policraticus* (1159), by John of Salisbury. Based on John's wide Classical reading, it centres on the ideal ruler, who represents a "public power." John admired the Roman emperors Augustus and Trajan, and, in a still predominantly feudal world, his book carried on the Roman tradition of centralized authority, though without its Byzantine autocracy. The prince, he insists, is he who rules in accordance with law, while a tyrant is one who oppresses the people by irresponsible power. This distinction, which derives from the Greeks, Cicero, and St. Augustine, is fundamental to Western concepts of liberty and the trusteeship of power.

John did not know Aristotle's *Politics*, but his learning is nevertheless remarkable, even if his political similes are unsophisticated. His favourite metaphor for the body politic is the human body: the place of the head is filled by the prince, who is subject only to God; the place of the heart is filled by the senate; the eyes, ears, and tongue are the judges, provincial governors, and soldiers; and the officials are the hands. The tax gatherers are the intestines and ought not to retain their accumulations too long, and the farmers and peasants are the feet. John also compares a commonwealth to a hive and even to a centipede. This vision of a centralized government, more appropriate to the memory of the Roman Empire than to a medieval monarchy, is a landmark of the 12th-century revival of speculative thought.

Aquinas

It is a far cry from this practical 12th-century treatise by a man of affairs to the elaborate justification of Christian kingship and natural law created by St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, during the climax of medieval Western civilization. His political philosophy is only part of a metaphysical construction of Aristotelian range—for Aristotle had now been assimilated from Arabic sources and given a new Christian content, with the added universality of the Stoic and Augustinian world outlook. Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* (1265/66–1273) purports to answer all the major questions of existence, including those of political philosophy. Like Aristotle, Aquinas thinks in terms of an ethical purpose. Natural law is discussed in the first part of the second book as part of the discussion of original sin and what would now be termed psychology, while war comes under the second part of the second book as an aspect of virtue and vice. Law is defined as “that which is regulation and measure.” It is designed to promote the “felicity and beatitude” that are the ends of human life. Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that “the city is the perfection of community” and that the purpose of public power should be to promote the common good. The only legitimate power is from the community, which is the sole medium of man's well being. In his *De regimine principum* (1266; *On the Government of Princes*), he compares society to a ship in need of a helmsman and repeats Aristotle's definition of man as a social and political animal. Again following Aristotle, he considers oligarchy unjust and democracy evil. Rulers should aim to make the “life of the multitude good in accordance with the purpose of life which is heavenly happiness.” They should also create peace, conserve life, and preserve the state—a threefold responsibility.

The 16th to the 18th Century

Machiavelli

In the thought of the Italian political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli may be seen a complete secularization of political philosophy. Machiavelli was an experienced diplomat and administrator, and, since he stated flatly how the power struggle was conducted in Renaissance Italy, he won a shocking reputation. He was not, however, without idealism about the old Roman republic, and he admired the independent spirit of the German and Swiss cities. This idealism made him all the more disgusted with Italian politics, of which he makes a disillusioned and objective analysis. Writing in retirement after political disgrace, Machiavelli states firmly that,

since this is to be asserted in general of men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowards, covetous, and as long as you succeed they are yours entirely: they will offer you their blood, property, life, and children...when the need is far distant; but when it approaches they turn against you.

And again,

since the desires of men are insatiable, nature prompting them to desire all things and fortune permitting them to enjoy but few, there results a constant discontent in their minds, and a loathing of what they possess.

The prince, he states, must combine the strength of the lion with the cunning of the fox: he must always be vigilant, ruthless, and prompt, striking down or neutralizing his adversaries without warning. And when he does an injury, it must be total. For "men ought to be either well treated or crushed, because they can avenge themselves of lighter injuries, of more serious ones they cannot." Moreover, "irresolute princes who follow a neutral path are generally ruined." He advises that it is best to come down at the right moment on the winning side and that conquered cities ought to be either governed directly by the tyrant himself residing there or destroyed. Furthermore, princes, unlike private men, need not keep faith: since politics reflects the law of the jungle, the state is a law unto itself, and normal moral rules do not apply to it.

Hobbes

The 17th-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who spent his life as a tutor and companion to great noblemen, was a writer of genius with a greater power of phrase than any other English political philosopher. He was not, as he is sometimes misrepresented, a prophet of "bourgeois" individualism, advocating free competition in a capitalist free market. On the contrary, he was writing in a preindustrial, if increasingly commercial, society and did not much admire wealth as such but rather "honours." He was socially conservative and eager to give a new philosophical sanction to a hierarchical, if businesslike, commonwealth in which family authority was most important.

Philosophically, Hobbes was influenced by nominalist scholastic philosophy, which had discarded Thomist metaphysics and had accepted strict limitations on the powers of mind. He therefore based his conclusions on the rudimentary mathematical physics and psychology of his day and aimed at practical objectives—order and stability. He believed that the fundamental physical law of life was motion and that the predominant human impulses were fear and, among those above the poverty level, pride and vanity. Men, Hobbes argued, are strictly conditioned and limited by these laws, and he tried to create a science of politics that would reflect them. "The skill of making, and maintaining Common-wealths," therefore,

consisteth in certain Rules, as doth Arithmetique and Geometry; not (as Tennis play) on Practise onely: which Rules, neither poor men have the leisure, nor men that have had the leisure, have hitherto had the curiosity, or the method to find out.

Hobbes ignores the Classical and Thomist concepts of a transcendent law of nature, itself reflecting divine law, and of a "Great Chain of Being" whereby the universe is held

harmoniously together. Following the practical method of investigation advocated by the French philosopher René Descartes, Hobbes states plainly that power creates law, not law power. For law is law only if it can be enforced, and the price of security is one supreme sovereign public power.

Hobbes, like Machiavelli, starts from an assumption of basic human folly, competitiveness, and depravity and contradicts Aristotle's assumption that man is by nature a "political animal." On the contrary, he is naturally antisocial, and, even when men meet for business and profit, only "a certain market-fellowship" is engendered. All society is only for gain or glory, and the only true equality between men is their power to kill each other. Hobbes sees and desires no other equality. Indeed, he specifically discouraged "men of low degree from a saucy behaviour towards their betters."

Burke

The 18th-century British statesman Edmund Burke, while elaborating Whig constitutional doctrine expressed with such common sense by Locke, wrote with more emotion and took more account of time and tradition. While reiterating that government is responsible to the governed and distinguishing between a political society and a mere mob, he thought that governments were trustees for previous generations and for posterity. He made the predominant political philosophy of the 18th-century establishment appear more attractive and moral, but he wrote no great single work of political philosophy, expressing himself instead in numerous pamphlets and speeches.

In his early *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756), Burke is critical of the sufferings imposed by government, but his "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents" defines and defends the principles of the Whig establishment. He invoked a transcendent morality to sanction a constitutional commonwealth, but he detested abstract political theories in whose name society is likely to be vivisected. He set great store by ordered liberty and denounced the arbitrary power of the Jacobins who had captured the French Revolution. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) and *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791), he discerned in the doctrine of sovereignty of the people, in whose name the revolutionaries were destroying the old order, another and worse form of arbitrary power.

Montesquieu

This sort of vision was developed and elegantly popularized by the cosmopolitan French savant Montesquieu, whose work *De l'esprit des loix* (1748; *The Spirit of Laws*) won immense influence. It was an ambitious treatise on human institutions and a pioneer work of anthropology and sociology. Believing in an ordered universe—for "how could blind fate have produced intelligent beings?"—Montesquieu examined the varieties of natural law, varying customs, laws, and civilizations in different

environments. He made the pedestrian good sense of Locke seem provincial, though he admired him and the British constitution. Unfortunately, he overemphasized the separation of executive, judicial, and legislative powers, considerable in Locke's day but by his own time tending to be concentrated in the sovereignty of Parliament. This doctrine much influenced the founders of the United States and the early French Revolutionaries.

Rousseau

The revolutionary romanticism of the Swiss French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau may be interpreted in part as a reaction to the analytic rationalism of the Enlightenment. He was trying to escape the aridity of a purely empirical and utilitarian outlook and attempting to create a substitute for revealed religion. There had been radical political slogans coined in medieval peasant revolts and in the 17th century, as in the debates following the revolt of radical officers in the Cromwellian army (1647), but the inspiration of these movements had been religion. Now Rousseau proclaimed a secular egalitarianism and a romantic cult of the common man. His famous declaration "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains" called into question the traditional social hierarchy: hitherto, political philosophers had thought in terms of elites, but now the mass of the people had found a champion and were becoming politically conscious.

Rousseau was a romantic, given to weeping under the willows on Lake Geneva, and his political works are hypnotically readable, flaming protests by one who found the hard rationality of the 18th century too exacting. But man is not, as Rousseau claims, born free. Man is born into society, which imposes restraints on him. Casting about to reconcile his artificial antithesis between man's purported natural state of freedom and his condition in society, Rousseau utilizes the old theories of contract and transforms them into the concept of the "general will." This general will, a moral will that aims at the common good and in which all participate directly, reconciles the individual and the community by representing the will of the community as deriving from the will of moral individuals, so to obey the laws of such a community is in a sense to follow one's own will, assuming that one is a moral individual.

The 19th Century

Utilitarianism

A major force in the political and social thought of the 19th century was utilitarianism, the doctrine that the actions of governments should be judged simply by the extent to which they promoted the "greatest happiness of the greatest number." The founder of the utilitarian school was Jeremy Bentham, an eccentric Englishman trained in the law. Bentham judged all laws and institutions by their utility thus defined. "The Fabric of Felicity," he wrote, "must be reared by the hands of reason and Law."

Bentham's *Fragment, on Government* (1776) and *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789) elaborated a utilitarian political philosophy. Bentham was an atheist and an exponent of the new laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, but he inspired the spate of legislation that, after the Reform Bill of 1832, had tackled the worst consequences of 18th-century inefficiency and of the Industrial Revolution. His influence, moreover, spread widely abroad. At first a simple reformer of law, Bentham attacked notions of contract and natural law as superfluous. "The indestructible prerogatives of mankind," he wrote, "have no need to be supported upon the sandy foundation of a fiction." The justification of government is pragmatic, its aim improvement and the release of the free choice of individuals and the play of market forces that will create prosperity. Bentham thought men far more reasonable and calculating than they are and brushed aside all the Christian and humanist ideas rationalizing instinctive loyalty and awe. He thought society could advance by calculation of pleasure and pain, and his *Introduction* even tries to work out "the value of a lot of pleasure and pain, how now to be measured." He compared the relative gratifications of health, wealth, power, friendship, and benevolence, as well as those of "irascible appetite" and "antipathy." He also thought of punishment purely as a deterrent, not as retribution, and graded offenses on the harm they did to happiness, not on how much they offended God or tradition.

T.H. Green

This kind of humanism was given a more elaborate philosophical content by the English philosopher T.H. Green, whose *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (1885) greatly influenced members of the Liberal Party in the British governments of the period 1906–15. Green, like John Stuart Mill and Tocqueville, wished to extend the minority culture to the people and even to use state power to "hinder hindrances to the good life." He had absorbed from Aristotle, Spinoza, Rousseau, and the German idealist philosopher G.W.F. Hegel an organic theory of the state. The latter, by promoting the free play of spontaneous institutions, ought to help individuals to "secure the common good of society [and] enable them to make the best of themselves."

Liberal Nationalism

Whereas Green avoided the extension of liberal and constitutional principles into international affairs, the Italian patriot and revolutionary prophet Giuseppe Mazzini made it his vision and became the most influential prophet of liberal nationalism. He envisaged a harmony of free peoples—a "sisterhood of nations"—in which the rule of military empires would be thrown off, the destruction of clerical and feudal privileges accomplished, and the emancipated peoples regenerated by means of education and universal suffrage. This vision inspired the more idealistic aspects of the Italian Risorgimento (national revival or resurrection) and of nationalistic revolts in Europe and beyond. Although, in fact, fervid nationalism often proved

destructive, Mazzini advocated a united Europe of free peoples, in which national singularities would be transcended in a pan-European harmony. This sort of liberal democratic idealism was catching, and even if it frequently inspired Machiavellian policies, it also inspired Pres. Woodrow Wilson of the United States – who, had he not been thwarted by domestic opposition, might well have made the Mazzini-inspired League of Nations a success. Moreover, the modern European Union owes much to the apparently impractical liberal idealism of Mazzini.

American Constitutionalism

The founders of the United States were deeply influenced by republicanism, by Locke, and by the optimism of the European Enlightenment. George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson all concurred that laws, rather than men, should be the final sanction and that government should be responsible to the governed. But the influence of Locke and the Enlightenment was not entirely happy. Adams, who followed Washington as president, prescribed a constitution with a balance of executive and legislative power checked by an independent judiciary. The federal constitution, moreover, could be amended only by a unanimous vote of the states. Eager to safeguard state liberties and the rights of property, the founding fathers gave the federal government insufficient revenues and coercive powers, as a result of which the constitution was stigmatized as being “no more than a Treaty of Alliance.” Yet the federal union was preserved. The civil power controlled the military, and there was religious toleration and freedom of the press and of economic enterprise. Most significantly, the concept of natural rights had found expression in the Declaration of Independence (1776) and was to influence markedly political and legal developments in the ensuing decades, as well as inspire the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789).

Saint-Simon and Comte

Another revolt against the prevalent establishment, national and international, was made by the French social philosopher Henri de Saint-Simon, who wanted to develop the Industrial Revolution so as to ameliorate the condition of the poorest classes. This would be achieved not through political revolution but through a government of bankers and administrators who would supersede kings, aristocrats, and politicians. If France were suddenly deprived of 3,000 leading scientists, engineers, bankers, painters, poets, and writers, he argued, the result would be catastrophic, but if all the courtiers and bishops and 10,000 landowners vanished, the loss, though deplorable, would be much less severe. Saint-Simon also demanded a united Europe, superseding the warring nation-states, with a European parliament and a joint development of industry and communication. He also invented a synthetic religion appropriate to a scientific phase of history, with a cult of Isaac Newton and the great men of science.

Saint-Simon's disciple Auguste Comte went farther. His *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830–42; *Course of Positive Philosophy*) and *Système de politique positive*, 4 vol. (1851–54; *System of Positive Polity*), elaborated a "religion of humanity," with ritual, calendar, a priesthood of scientists, and secular saints, including Julius Caesar, Dante, and Joan of Arc. Society would be ruled by bankers and technocrats and Europe united into a Western republic. This doctrine, backed by pioneering sociology, won much influence among intellectuals. Comte, like Saint-Simon, tackled the essential questions: how to deploy the power of modern technology for the benefit of all humankind; how to avoid wars between sovereign states; and how to fill the void left by the waning of Christian beliefs.

Western Political Philosophy from the Start of the 20th Century

Nineteenth-century European civilization had been the first to dominate and pervade the whole world and to create a new self-sustaining productivity in which all eventually might share. But, as Saint-Simon had pointed out, this civilization had a fatal flaw. The rule of law, accepted within the politically advanced states, had never been achieved among them. Heavily armed nations and empires remained in a Hobbesian "posture of war," and Classical and medieval ideals of world order had long been discarded. Within states, also, laissez-faire capitalism had exacerbated class conflicts, while the decline of religious belief had undermined traditional solidarity. And in 1914, when a general European war broke out, the peoples, contrary to the hopes of cosmopolitan revolutionaries, rallied behind their national governments. When the victorious powers failed to promote world order through the League of Nations, a second global conflict, even more horrific than the first, ensued, during which were developed weapons so destructive as to threaten life everywhere.

In the aftermath of these catastrophes and the worldwide revulsion they occasioned, not least against the European colonial powers, various mainstreams of 20th-century political philosophy may be discerned. First, Marxism continued to inspire revolutionary doctrines as well as more-sober political and cultural analyses, some relying on insights borrowed from psychoanalytic theory. Second, liberalism continued to be developed and refined, partly in response to libertarian and communitarian critiques. Third, a line of thought pursued by Michel Foucault and later postmodern philosophers questioned the possibility of objectively valid political values and genuinely neutral political institutions. And fourth, some feminist philosophers argued that the historical domination of men over women in the political and economic spheres reflects the inherently oppressive nature of heterosexual relationships.

Marxist doctrines

Although many of Marx's original insights into socioeconomic processes and their effects on conventional political ideology and culture are now widely accepted, his specific historical prophecies were not fulfilled. The major proletarian revolutions, for example, came not in economically advanced countries but in economically underdeveloped ones (Russia and China), and the supposedly proletarian dictatorships they produced, far from withering away or being diminished by inexorable economic trends, became even more powerful and oppressive than the governments they replaced. Soviet and eastern European communism eventually collapsed in failure in 1989–91, to be replaced in Russia by a quasi-democratic capitalist oligarchy.

Lenin

The first and by far the most significant interpretation of Marx's doctrine was realized in the Soviet Union by Vladimir Ilich Lenin and developed by Joseph Stalin and was entirely authoritarian. According to Marx and Engels, the revolution could occur in Russia only after the bourgeois phase of production had "contradicted" the tsarist order, but Lenin was determined to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the upheaval of World War I to settle accounts directly with the "accursed heritage of serfdom." In the Russian Revolution of 1917, he engineered a coup that secured the support of the peasantry and the industrial workers. He also adopted the revolutionary theorist Leon Trotsky's idea of a "permanent revolution" from above by a small revolutionary elite (*see* Trotskyism).

In 1921 he further adapted theory to the times. His New Economic Policy sanctioned the development of a class of prosperous kulak peasantry to keep the economy viable. For Lenin always thought in terms of world revolution, and, in spite of the failure of the Marxists in central Europe and the defeat of the Red armies in Poland, he died in the expectation of a global sequel. Thus, in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), he had extended the class war into an inevitable conflict between European imperialism and the colonial peoples involved. He had been influenced by the English historian J.A. Hobson's *Imperialism, a Study* (1902), which alleged that decadent capitalism was bound to turn from glutted markets at home to exploit the toil of "reluctant and unassimilated peoples."

Lukács and Gramsci

Many Marxist revisionists tended toward anarchism, stressing the Hegelian and utopian elements of his theory. The Hungarian philosopher György Lukács, for example, and the German-born American philosopher Herbert Marcuse, who fled Nazi Germany in 1934, won some following in the mid-20th century among those in revolt against both authoritarian "peoples' democracies" and the diffused capitalism and meritocracy of the managerial welfare state. Lukács's *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*

(1923; *History and Class Consciousness*), a neo-Hegelian work, claims that only the intuition of the proletariat can properly apprehend the totality of history. But world revolution is contingent, not inevitable, and Marxism is an instrument, not a prediction. Lukács renounced this heresy after residence in the Soviet Union under Stalin, but he maintained influence through literary and dramatic criticism. After Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in 1956, Lukács advocated peaceful coexistence and intellectual rather than political subversion. In *Wider den missverstandenen Realismus* (1963; *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*), he again relates Marx to Hegel and even to Aristotle, against the Stalinist claim that Marx made a radically new departure. Lukács's neo-Marxist literary criticism can be tendentious, but his neo-Hegelian insights, strikingly expressed, have appealed to those eager to salvage the more humane aspects of Marxism and to promote revolution, even against a modified capitalism and social democracy, by intellectual rather than political means.

The Development of Liberal Theory

Logical-Positivist Interlude

Political and ethical philosophy in English-speaking countries in the first half of the 20th century was inhibited to some extent by the advent in the early 1930s of logical positivism, which conceived of knowledge claims on the model of the hypotheses of natural science. According to the simplest version of logical positivism, genuine knowledge claims can be divided into two groups: (1) those that can be verified or falsified on the basis of observation, or sense experience (empirical claims); and (2) those that are true or false simply by virtue of the conventional meanings assigned to the words they contain (tautologies or contradictions), along with their logical implications. All other claims, including the evaluative assertions made by traditional political and ethical philosophers, are literally meaningless, hence not worth discussing. A complementary view held by some logical positivists was that an evaluative assertion, properly understood, is not a statement of fact but either an expression of the speaker's attitude (e.g., of approval or disapproval) or an imperative—a speech act aimed at influencing the behaviour of others. This view of the language of ethical and political philosophy tended to limit serious study in those fields until the 1960s, when logical positivism came to be regarded as simplistic in its conceptions of linguistic meaning and scientific practice.

Rawls

The publication of *A Theory of Justice* (1971), by the American philosopher John Rawls, spurred a revival of interest in the philosophical foundations of political liberalism. The viability of liberalism was thereafter a major theme of political philosophy in English-speaking countries.

According to the American philosopher Thomas Nagel, liberalism is the conjunction of two ideals: (1) individuals should have liberty of thought and speech and wide freedom to live their lives as they choose (so long as they do not harm others in certain ways), and (2) individuals in any society should be able to determine through majority rule the laws by which they are governed and should not be so unequal in status or wealth that they have unequal opportunities to participate in democratic decision making. Various traditional and modern versions of liberalism differ from each other in their interpretation of these ideals and in the relative importance they assign to them.

In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls observed that a necessary condition of justice in any society is that each individual should be the equal bearer of certain rights that cannot be disregarded under any circumstances, even if doing so would advance the general welfare or satisfy the demands of a majority. This condition cannot be met by utilitarianism, because that ethical theory would countenance forms of government in which the greater happiness of a majority is achieved by neglecting the rights and interests of a minority. Hence, utilitarianism is unsatisfactory as a theory of justice, and another theory must be sought.

According to Rawls, a just society is one whose major political, social, and economic institutions, taken together, satisfy the following two principles:

1. *Each person has an equal claim to a scheme of basic rights and liberties that is the maximum consistent with the same scheme for all.*
2. *Social and economic inequalities are permissible only if: (a) they confer the greatest benefit to the least-advantaged members of society, and (b) they are attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.*

The basic rights and liberties in principle 1 include the rights and liberties of democratic citizenship, such as the right to vote; the right to run for office in free elections; freedom of speech, assembly, and religion; the right to a fair trial; and, more generally, the right to the rule of law. Principle 1 is accorded strict priority over principle 2, which regulates social and economic inequalities.

Principle 2 combines two ideals. The first, known as the "difference principle," requires that any unequal distribution of social or economic goods (e.g., wealth) must be such that the least-advantaged members of society would be better off under that distribution than they would be under any other distribution consistent with principle 1, including an equal distribution. (A slightly unequal distribution might benefit the least advantaged by encouraging greater overall productivity.) The second ideal is meritocracy, understood in a very demanding way. According to Rawls, fair equality of opportunity obtains in a society when all persons with the same native talent (genetic inheritance) and the same degree of ambition have the same prospects for success in all competitions for positions that confer special economic and social advantages.

Why suppose with Rawls that justice requires an approximately egalitarian redistribution of social and economic goods? After all, a person who prospers in a market economy might plausibly say, "I earned my wealth. Therefore, I am entitled to keep it." But how one fares in a market economy depends on luck as well as effort. There is the luck of being in the right place at the right time and of benefiting from unpredictable shifts in supply and demand, but there is also the luck of being born with greater or lesser intelligence and other desirable traits, along with the luck of growing up in a nurturing environment. No one can take credit for this kind of luck, but it decisively influences how one fares in the many competitions by which social and economic goods are distributed. Indeed, sheer brute luck is so thoroughly intermixed with the contributions one makes to one's own success (or failure) that it is ultimately impossible to distinguish what a person is responsible for from what he is not. Given this fact, Rawls urges, the only plausible justification of inequality is that it serves to render everyone better off, especially those who have the least.

Rawls tries to accommodate his theory of justice to what he takes to be the important fact that reasonable people disagree deeply about the nature of morality and the good life and will continue to do so in any nontyrannical society that respects freedom of speech. He aims to render his theory noncommittal on these controversial matters and to posit a set of principles of justice that all reasonable persons can accept as valid, despite their disagreements.

Libertarian and Communitarian Critiques

Despite its wide appeal, Rawls's liberal egalitarianism soon faced challengers. An early conservative rival was libertarianism. According to this view, because each person is literally the sole rightful owner of himself, no one has property rights in anyone else (no person can own another person), and no one owes anything to anyone else. By "appropriating" unowned things, an individual may acquire over them full private ownership rights, which he may give away or exchange. One has the right to do whatever one chooses with whatever one legitimately owns, as long as one does not harm others in specified ways—i.e., by coercion, force, violence, fraud, theft, extortion, or physical damage to another's property. According to libertarians, Rawlsian liberal egalitarianism is unjust because it would allow (indeed, require) the state to redistribute social and economic goods without their owners' consent, in violation of their private ownership rights.

The most spirited and sophisticated presentation of the libertarian critique was *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974), by the American philosopher Robert Nozick (1938–2002). Nozick also argued that a "minimal state," one that limited its activities to the enforcement of people's basic libertarian rights, could have arisen in a hypothetical "state of nature" through a process in which no one's basic libertarian rights are violated. He regarded this demonstration as a refutation of anarchism, the doctrine that the state is inherently unjustified.

Rawls's theory of justice was challenged from other theoretical perspectives as well. Adherents of communitarianism, such as Michael Sandel and Michael Walzer, urged that the shared understanding of a community concerning how it is appropriate to live should outweigh the abstract and putatively impartial requirements of universal justice. Even liberal egalitarians criticized some aspects of Rawls's theory. Ronald Dworkin, for example, argued that understanding egalitarian justice requires striking the correct balance between an individual's responsibility for his own life and society's collective responsibility to provide genuine equal opportunity for all citizens.

Feminism and sexual equality

Hatred and hostility based on racial, ethnic, tribal, and other group divisions gave rise to some of the worst catastrophes of 20th-century history. Political philosophers responded to these developments in diverse ways. Perhaps the most innovative philosophical response to social and political oppression was developed by contemporary feminists seeking to address the domination of women by men.

One interesting account of sexual equality and the obstacles to attaining it emerged in the work of the American feminist legal theorist Catharine A. MacKinnon. She asserted that the struggle to overcome male domination is faced with a deeply entrenched adversary: sexual desire between heterosexual women and men. The subjugation of women in society strongly influences conventional standards of femininity and masculinity, which in turn determine what heterosexual individuals find attractive in the opposite sex. Thus, according to MacKinnon, heterosexual women tend to find dominant men sexually attractive, while heterosexual men tend to find submissive women sexually attractive. The latter is the stronger and more important dynamic, since men as a group are politically, economically, and socially more powerful than women. The upshot is that the ordinary and widespread sexual attraction between heterosexual women and men is corrupted by a kind of sadism. The struggle for equal rights and equal power for women is opposed not only by laws, institutions, and practices but also by sexual desire itself. Given this analysis, the legal and cultural tolerance of pornography, which makes the subordination of women sexually appealing to men, is immoral. Pornography serves only to perpetuate a regime of sex-based domination that any decent society should reject.

REFERENCES

- Aslan, Reza (2005). *No god but God*. Random House Inc. p. 153. ISBN 978-1-58836-445-6. By the ninth and tenth centuries...
- Aspalter, Christian (2001). *Importance of Christian and Social Democratic movements in welfare politics*. Nova Publishers. p. 70.

- Barens, Ingo; Caspari, Volker; Schefold, Bertram (2004). Barens, Ingo, ed. *Political events and economic ideas*. Volker Caspari ed., Bertram Schefold ed. Edward Elgar Publishing. pp. 206–207. ISBN 978-1-84542-152-6. Economic theory as political philosophy: the example of the French Enlightenment
- Boesche, Roger (2002). *The First Great Political Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra*. Lexington Books. p. 7. ISBN 0-7391-0401-2.
- Brown, D. Mackenzie (1982). *The White Umbrella: Indian Political Thought from Manu to Gandhi*. Greenwood Press. p. 64. ISBN 978-0313232107.
- Copleston, Frederick (1999). *A history of philosophy* 3. Continuum International Publishing Group. p. 346. ISBN 978-0-86012-296-8. There was, however, at least one department of thought ...
- Copleston, Frederick (1999). *A history of philosophy* 3. Continuum International Publishing Group. pp. 310–312.
- David Lewis Schaefer, Robert Nozick and the Coast of Utopia, *The New York Sun*, April 30, 2008.
- Deutsch, Eliot; Ronald Bontekoei (1999). *A companion to world philosophies*. Wiley Blackwell. p. 183.
- Gellner, Ernest (1992). *Plough, Sword, and Book*. University of Chicago Press. p. 239. ISBN 978-0-226-28702-7. (Ibn Khaldun's definition of government probably remains the best: ...)
- Gutmann, Amy, and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Princeton University Press, 1996). Also see Gutmann and Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton University Press, 2002).
- Hsü, Leonard Shihlien (2005). *The political philosophy of Confucianism*. Routledge. pp. xvii–xx. ISBN 978-0-415-36154-5. The importance of a scientific study of Confucian political philosophy could hardly be overstated.
- Johansen, Bruce Elliott (1996). *Native American political systems and the evolution of democracy*. Greenwood Publishing Group. p. 69. ISBN 978-0-313-30010-3. ... the three-tier system of federalism ... is an inheritance of Iroquois inspiration
- Johnston, Ian (February 2002). "Lecture on Machiavelli's *The Prince*". Malaspina University College. Retrieved 2007-02-20.
- Byrne, James M. (1997). *Religion and the Enlightenment*. Westminster John Knox Press. pp. 1–2. ISBN 978-0-664-25760-6. ... there emerged groups of freethinkers intent on grounding knowledge on the exercise of critical reason, as opposed to ... established religion ...
- Kain, Philip J. (1993). *Marx and modern political theory*. Rowman & Littlefield. pp. 1–4. ISBN 978-0-8476-7866-2. Some of his texts, especially the *Communist Manifesto* made him seem like a sort of communist Descartes ...
- Koetsier, L. S. (2004). *Natural Law and Calvinist Political Theory*. Trafford Publishing. p. 19. ISBN 978-1-4122-1440-7. ...the Medieval Scholastics revived the concept of natural law.
- Kraut, Richard (2002). *Aristotle: political philosophy*. Oxford University Press. p. 3. ISBN 978-0-19-878200-1. To understand and assess Aristotle's contributions to political thought ...
- Manu ((Lawgiver)); Kullükabhamma (1796). *Institutes of Hindu Law: Or, The Ordinances of Menu, According to the Gloss of Cullúca*. Calcutta, Printed by order of the government, London reprinted, for J. Sewell ...; and J. Debrett.

- Marx, Karl. "Capital Volume One, Afterword to the Second German Edition". Retrieved 24 September 2013.
- Radford, Robert T. (2002). *Cicero: a study in the origins of republican philosophy*. Rodopi. p. 1. ISBN 978-90-420-1467-1. His most lasting political contribution is in his work on political philosophy.
- Rangarajan, L N (2000). *The ARTHASHASTRA*. Penguin UK,. p. 95. ISBN 9788184750119.
- Richard M. Ebeling (2003). *Austrian economics and the political economy of freedom*. Edward Elgar Pub. ISBN 978-1-84064-940-6.
- Sahakian, Mabel Lewis (1993). *Ideas of the great philosophers*. Barnes & Noble Publishing. p. 59. ISBN 978-1-56619-271-2. ... Western philosophical tradition can be traced back as early as Plato (427–347 B.C.).
- Sankhdher, Madan Mohan; Kaur, Gurdeep (2005). *Politics in India : Ancient India, Politics of Change, Modern India*. Deep and Deep Publications,. p. 95. ISBN 9788176296557.
- Schall, James V. (1998). *At the Limits of Political Philosophy*. CUA Press. p. 40. ISBN 978-0-8132-0922-7. In political philosophy, St. Augustine was a follower of Plato ...
- Valente, Claire (2003). *The theory and practice of revolt in medieval England*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd. p. 14. ISBN 978-0-7546-0901-8. The two starting points of most medieval discussions ...