BASIC PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL THEORY

B.A. English

Semester - I

BAG - 101

SHRI VENKATESHWARA UNIVERSITY

UTTAR PRADESH-244236

Author

Mr. Rukmana Meher, Senior Research Scholar, Center for West Asian Studies, School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi

Vikas® is the registered trademark of Vikas® Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

VIKAS® PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
E-28, Sector-8, Noida - 201301 (UP)
Phone: 0120-4078900 • Fax: 0120-4078999
Regd. Office: A-27, 2nd Floor, Mohan Co-operative Industrial Estate, New Delhi 1100 44
Website: www.vikaspublishing.com • Email: helpline@vikaspublishing.com

SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

Basic Principles of Political Theory

Syllabi	Mapping in Book
Group - A **Unit - I** Different Interpretations of Political Theory: The Classical Tradition of Political Theory; Importance and Limitations of Classical Tradition • Moves towards a Science of Politics –Positivism and Logical Positivism • Behaviouralism and Post–Behaviouralism • Debate on the 'Decline'/ 'Revival' of Political Theory • Impact of Positivism on Political Science **Unit - II** Use of Rational Actors Models • Public Choice Approach • Influence of General Systems Theory: Input–Output Analysis (David Easton) • Structural–Functionalism (Almond and Powell) • Communication Model (Karl Duetsch)	**Chapter 1:** Different Interpretation of Political Theory **(Pages 3-37);** **Chapter 2:** Impact of Positivism on Political Science **(Pages 39-74)**
Group B **Unit - III** Contemporary Liberalism: • Rawls • Nozick • Communitarianism	**Chapter 3:** Contemporary Liberalism **(Pages 75-111)**
Unit - IV Marxist View of Science and Marxist Approach: • Analysis of Political Economy–Structuralist and Marxist Neo–Marxist Perspectives on Development: • Analysis of Mode of Production–Key Debates • Nature of State–Theory of Relative Autonomy and Authoritarian Statism	**Chapter 4:** Marxist View of Science and Marxist Approach **(Pages 113-140)**

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Politics plays a defining role in the society. It not only lays the foundation of our social life but also is the building block of the civil society. It performs the legal and administrative functions of the society, protecting states from complete anarchy. This title, *Basic Principles of Political Theory* presents a comprehensive study of various political theories and their interpretation.

Unit 1 introduces the meaning of political theory, the classical tradition of political theory and the science of politics. It also, delves into the concept of behaviouralism and post-behaviouralism. Unit 2 analyses the role of positivism in political science constituting the application of Rational Actors Model, Public Choice Approach, General System Theory and Structural Functionalism. Unit 3 explores the different facets of contemporary liberalism, including the perspectives put forth by John Rawls and Robert Nozick. Unit 4 explains the Marxist approach to political theory, constituting of a thorough evaluation of the mode of production and nature of state.

This book is written with the distance learning student in mind. It is presented in a user-friendly format and a clear, lucid language. Each Unit contains an Introduction and a list of Unit Objectives to prepare the student with an overview of the text. At the end of each unit is a list of Key Terms and a Summary, to aid in recollection. All units contain Questions and Exercises and strategically placed 'Check Your Progress' questions so that the student can keep track of what they have learnt.

UNIT 1 DIFFERENT INTERPRETATION OF POLITICAL THEORY

Structure

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be acquainted with the meaning of 'theory' and 'political theory'. You will be made familiar with the concept of political theory and its different interpretations where you will study about the meaning, nature and significance of political theory. The unit also discusses the genesis, development and significance of classical tradition of political theory. There will also be a discussion on science of politics and its two variants positivism and logical positivism. Further, you will also learn about the development of behaviouralism and post behaviouralism in the contemporary political discourse. The unit will also deal with the discourse on the decline or revival of political theory.

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Define the meaning, nature and significance of political theory
- Explain the development and contributions of classical tradition to political theory
- Discuss the politics as a scientific subject and its variants
- Define the behaviouralism and post behaviouralism
- Interpret the discourse on the decline or revival of political theory

NOTES

1.2 MEANING OF POLITICAL THEORY

Political theory is an interdisciplinary endeavour whose centre of gravity lies at the humanities end of the happily still undisciplined discipline of the political science. Its tradition, approaches, and styles vary but the feel is united by a commitment to theorise, critic and diagnose the norms, practices, and organisation of political action in the past and present, in our own places and elsewhere. The twentieth-century use of the terms 'Philosophy', 'Science' and 'Theories' is not definitely settled. It could not be precise because the interrelation between philosophy, science and theory is one of the fundamental problems in the present crisis of scientific thinking. This is not to say that there is complete disagreement about the use of the three terms. The term 'theory' had been derived from the Greek word 'theoria' which means a well focussed mental look taken at something in a state of contemplation with the intention to grasp or understand it. Karl Deutsch in his famous book *The Nerves of Government* (1963) defines a theory as an attempt to explain, order and relate disjointed data, identifies what is relevant and therefore points out what is missing in any phenomenon predicted on the basis of observable facts. 'Theory' is always used to designate attempts to explain phenomena, especially when that is done in general and abstract terms. The theory may be 'scientific' or 'non scientific' according to whether or not scientific rules are followed. In explaining phenomena, a theory may refer to some general 'law', in the sense of 'regularity', or to several such laws. These laws may have been discovered earlier, the theory may be referring to them as known. The theory may consist of the suggestion that some previously hidden general law explains the respective events. New theories often combine references to long-established laws with the suggestion of some additional law. Therefore, a 'theory' is never a 'law'; it refers to laws and may suggest the existence of additional laws, but it is not itself a law. It may try to 'explain' a law, of course; but if that is the intention the theory must refer to some more general law. A law can never be deduced directly from a theory; it can be deduced only from a more general law offered in a theory. Conversely, a 'law' is not a 'theory'; it is, rather, a 'fact' namely, the fact that certain constituent facts or factors are always associated or, in a less strict sense of the term 'law', that they are associated 'as a rule' or 'generally'. The term may be meant to refer to a legal, moral, aesthetic, or procedural 'norm'. The theory implies both science and philosophy. The theory not merely describe, it also discovers, determines, explains, frames and argues over a phenomenon. There is also difference between theory and thought. Theory can be termed as a thought about thought and not entire thought itself. Theory is also different from hypothesis which lacks definiteness. Theory and philosophy are different in the sense that while the former talks about 'something', the latter talks about 'everything'.

The word theory is Greek; and in the Greek language it belongs to a short vocabulary of five words which is worth considering, *Thea*: something seen, a 'spectacle', an occurrence; *Theorein*: to look at, to observe what is going on; *Theoros*: an intelligent observer; one who looks at what is going on, asks himself questions about it and tries to understand it; *Theoria*: the act or procedure of seeking to understand what is going on: 'theorizing'; *Theorema*: what may emerge from 'theorizing', a conclusion reached by a *theoros*; 'An understanding' of what is going on; a 'theorem'.

The term 'theory' should be reserved for collections of statements that propose causal explanations of phenomena and meet the following three criteria:

1. Most political scientists would agree that the statements that compose a theory should be internally consistent.

NOTES

2. Political scientists would also agree that theories should be logically complete (i.e., the hypotheses deduced from the theory should follow logically from the assumptions of the theory).
3. They would agree that the set of statements must have falsiûable implications.

The term 'theory' stands for a systematic knowledge. Thus 'political theory' denotes a systematic knowledge of political phenomena. Political theory may be defined as the discipline which aims to explain, justify or criticize the disposition of power in society. It delineates the balance of power between states, groups and individuals. 'Power' is used broadly here: even *obedience* is an aspect of power, for it connotes deliberate self-restraint by citizens who might otherwise resist the government. Essentially, power lies where there are resources (personal, economic, moral, ideological, etc.) and operates through inducements as much as through threats and through the withholding as well as the deployment of resources. Sociologists often analyse power in terms of individual interaction, as A's capacity to get B to comply with her (A's) desires; political theory sets these familiar, everyday machinations in a formal power structure. However, even theorists observing the same phenomena may conceptualize the power structure differently (where liberals saw equality and social harmony, Marx saw conflict and oppression). Different conclusions result: for example, a constitutionalist who views politics in terms of institutions might consider that unions should not be politically active, while someone viewing politics as pressure group activity would think it inevitable that they should be. Diverse conceptualizations of power therefore generate diverse political ideals and problems.

Political theory is a theory about what is 'political'. It can be termed as a science and philosophy of what is political. *George H. Sabine* in his celebrated work *A History of Political Theory* term it as anything about politics or relevant to politics. In a narrow sense, he also called it 'the disciplined investigation of political problems'. Political theory is not only a theory of or about politics; it is also the science of politics and the philosophy of politics. *Bluhen* in his classic work *Theories of Political System* (1981) pointed out that political theory stands for an abstract model of the political order . . . . a guide to the systematic collection and analysis of political data. Another political scientist *Andrew Hacker*, in his famous book *Political Theory: Philosophy, Ideology, Science* (1961) says that political theory is a theory, in ideal terms, is dispassionate and disinterested. As science, it will describe political reality without trying to pass judgement on what is being depicted, either implicitly or explicitly. As philosophy, it will describe rules of conduct which will secure good life for all of society. Political theory by nature is a formal, logical and systematic analysis of processes and consequences of political activity. The method of the political theory is analytical, expository and explanatory. Broadly speaking, political theory is concerned with three types of statements:

1. empirical statement, which is based on observation, through sense-experience alone;
2. logical statement, which is based on reasoning (e.g. two plus two is four); and
3. evaluative statement, which is based on value-judgment (e.g. 'men are born free and equal').

Sheldon Wolin in his famous book *Politics and Vision* (1960) identifies three contents of political theory:

(i) It is a form of activity centring around the quest for competitive advantage between groups, individuals, or societies;

NOTES

(ii) It is a form of activity conditioned by the fact that it occurs within a situation of change and relative scarcity; and

(iii) A form of activity in which the pursuits of advantage produce consequences of such magnitude that they affect in a significant way the whole society or a substantial portion of it.

One of the tasks of political theory must be to dispel popular delusions of the kinds just described and to expose misleading ideas. In this connection, it is relevant to consider briefly the other misleading idea so often accorded final authority in political arguments, *human nature*. Often, in debate, an insubstantial hypothesis about human nature is invoked to refute a theory or ideology. How often is it argued that socialism is impossible because people are greedy by nature? In common with other social science subjects, political theory itself must make suppositions about people's character or motivation, or, at least, minimal assumptions about regularities in their behaviour. This is necessary for a consistent explanation of political life. But such assumptions, whether covert or explicit, hypothetical or well grounded in fact, determine from the start which form a theory will take.

Exponents of 'logical positivism' argue that evaluative statements have no empirical contempt or logical structure. They are expression of subjective reflection or emotional preference. Likewise, champions of scientific method for the study of politics insist on a 'value-free' or 'value-neutral' approach. In any case, political theory cannot be confined to the so-called scientific knowledge. It is equally concerned with determining values which come with in the scope of philosophy. The view that values are based on individual or group preferences cannot be accepted. On the contrary values do have a sound logical structure unless we mistake them for biased statement. Determination of values is the basis of a sound public policy or decision. If we renounce this responsibility, it may fall in irresponsible hands, with disaster consequences. Hence political theory must comprehend both political science and political philosophy. The major characteristics of political theory are the following:

(a) It is concerned with the arena of politics only. However it attempts to understand political in relation to social, psychological, economic, moral and ecological etc.

(b) Its methods include description, explanation and investigation.

The objective of political theory is to build a good state in a healthy society.

(c) It is not only descriptive but also explanatory.

(d) It attempts to explain, evaluate and predict political phenomena.

The term political theory is often confused with the term like political philosophy, political ideology and political thought etc. It needs a proper understanding of these related terms. Dwelling on the nature of political theory, George Catlin (*Political Quarterly*, March 1957) significantly observed: 'the theory (of politics) itself is divided into political science and political philosophy'. Political science and political philosophy play complementary role in the realm of political theory. Significance of political theory may therefore, be sought in both of these areas. The term political theory and political philosophy are often used interchangeably, but there is a recognizable difference between the theoretical work of political scientists and that of political philosophers. The political theory helps in the control of social life. The knowledge of political science enables us to secure development of society from our human resources. Political theory also guides us to find remedies of political instability and various types of social crisis. Political theory helps in social criticism and reconstruction. Various political paradigms given by

NOTES

political philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, Mill and Macpherson give us ample insights into the possible ills of social life and their remedies. We can draw our own scheme of social reconstruction on the basis of these insights. The political theory also helps in the clarification of concepts. The tradition of political theory encourages a dignified debate between upholders of different points of view. It thereby encourages mutual respect and toleration. Political philosophy provides general answers to general questions to concepts and theories such as justice, right, the distinction between is and ought and the larger issues of politics. Political philosophy is a part of normative political theory, for its attempt to establish the inter-relationships between the concepts. It would not be wrong to say that every political philosopher is a theorist, though not every political theorist is a political philosopher.

Political thought can be termed as the thought of the whole community. The writings and speeches of the articulate sections like professional politicians, political commentators, social reformers and ordinary persons of a community can be included in this category. It can also be in the form of political treaties, scholarly articles, speeches, government policies and decisions and poems and prose that expresses the anguish of people thought is time bound. In a nutshell, political thought includes theory that attempts to explain political behaviour, values to evaluate it and methods to control it. On the other hand, political theory refers to the speculations by a single individual usually articulated in treatise(s) as modes of explanations. It consists of theories of institutions, including those of the state, of law, of representation, of election. Political theory relies on the comparative and explanatory mode of enquiry. Political theory attempts to explain the attitudes and actions arising from ordinary political life and to generalize about them in a particular context; thus political theory is concerned about/ with the relationship between concepts and circumstances. Political philosophy attempts to resolve or to understand conflicts between political theories which might appear equally acceptable in given circumstances.

Political ideology is also somewhat different from political theory. It is a systematic and all-embracing doctrine which attempts to give a complete and universally applicable theory of human nature and society, with a detail programme of attaining it. John Locke (1632–1704) has often been described as the father of modern ideologies. Marxism is a classical example of an ideology summed up in a statement that the purpose of philosophy is to change and not merely interpreted the world. All political ideology is political philosophy though the reverse is not true. The twentieth century has seen many ideologies like fascism, Nazism, communism and liberalism. A distinctive trait of political ideology is its dogmatism which, unlike political philosophy, recruits and discourages critical appraisal because of its aim of realizing the perfect society. Political ideology, according to Germino and Sabine is a negation of political theory. An ideology is of recent origin, and under the influence of positivism is based on subjective, unverifiable value preferences.

Broadly speaking, political theory consists of political science and political philosophy. These two branches of political theory taken together perform three functions which are recognized as the function of political theory: (a) description; (b) criticism; and (c) reconstruction. Political science mainly relies on empirical method, that is, the knowledge based on our practical experience which is supposed to the must reliable. Hence it specializes in description. Political philosophy being concerned with value-judgment specialises in 'criticism' and 'reconstruction'. Advocates of positivism, new-positivism (Logical Positivism) and behavouralism wish to confine political theory to the sphere of political science. They argue that the question of value-judgment should be dropped from the purview of political theory all together. However, since the advent of

NOTES

post-behaviouralism(1969) and consequent upon the revival of political philosophy in the 1970s and 1980s there has been a renewed emphasis on values in the realm of political theory. It is now argued that value-judgment serves as an essential guide to social policy. Indifference to value-judgment will leave society in the dark. The emerging concerns with environmentalism, feminism, human rights and social justice for the subaltern groups, etc has called for exploring the new horizons of value-judgment. Thus, all the functions of political theory have now become very important and urgent in the present day world where most of our problems are assuming a global dimensions and there being recognised as the problems of humanity as such.

According to George H. Sabine every political theory could be scrutinized from two points of view: as social philosophy, and as ideology. As ideology, theories were psychological phenomena, precluding truth or falsity. Theories were beliefs, 'events in peoples mind and factors in their conduct' irrespective of their validity or verifiability. Theories played an influential role in history and therefore the task of a historian was to ascertain the extent to which the theories help in the shaping the course of history. A theory had to be examined for its meaning, rather then for its impact on human actions, viewed in this perspective a theory comprised two kind of propositions: factual and moral. Sabine focused on factual rather then moral statements, for the latter precluded description of truth or falsity. George Sabine says the moral element characterized political theory which was why it was primarily a moral enterprise.

Political theory is a close relation of moral philosophy. Both are normative and evaluative and, although not all political values have moral origins (*tradition*, which Burke valued, and *efficiency* seem to be non-moral), they rely on moral language, since a value is something we would consider *good*, and would prefer to have more, rather than less, of. Although an ideal such as democracy is primarily political, it's supporting values, freedom and equality, are as pervasive in moral as in political philosophising. This shared area of concern and similarity of language is appropriate, since both moral and political philosophy attempt to define the 'Good Life', the first on an individual level, the second for the community at large. So the importation of moral terms into political theory is both permissible and necessary. Is there a necessary connection between political theory and ideology? Ideology, as will be argued, is crucial in forming the political theorist's own view of the world. It would be convenient if we could distinguish clearly between ideology and theory–if we could label theory 'ideological' whenever values and prescriptive or persuasive elements are visible. But many ideological influences affect theory invisibly, pre-selecting which data the theory will explain, and dictating its conceptual vocabulary from the start. Likewise, much theory contains ideological bias without having ideology's express aim of persuasion. All political theory and theorizing is susceptible to greater or lesser ideological bias, and that a necessary task for commentators and students is to identify and evaluate that bias–and, of course, their own bias.

Political theory is an umbrella term. It comprehends the persuasive and normative doctrines called ideologies; it also embraces the analytical activity known as *political philosophy*, which styles itself 'value-free'. Rather than propounding grandiose theses about the nature of political society and the 'Good Life', this examines the units of which political theory, including ideology, is composed, the *concepts*. Hence, it is sometimes called 'conceptual analysis'. It has been held that its main endeavour is to 'clear up confusions' which result from non-clarity or inconsistency in the use of concepts such as freedom and equality by providing a clear and coherent account of their proper use. This activity often employs the methods established by the school of philosophy called 'linguistic analysis', which flourished for several decades after World War II but has more recently

NOTES

been generally rejected as too narrow and barren. A more normative and engaged kind of philosophy is now favoured. The other task of political philosophy is said to be to provide generally acceptable definitions of central political terms. These self-ascribed functions also rest on the conviction that even value-laden concepts are capable of a constant and definite meaning.

Political theory is a personal endeavour to understand and experience as the present political reality and also to evolve a mechanism in order to transcend the present imperfect society leading to perfection and a more just order. This includes a study of the evolution, nature, composition, need and purpose of the governmental apparatus, and also an understanding of human perception and nature, and its relationship with the larger community. The golden age of political theory was from Plato (428/27–347 B.C) to Hegel (1770–1831 A.D). Political theory is the one of the core idea of political science. Political theory as an academic discipline was emerged recently. Before its emergence those engaged in enterprise were known as philosopher or scientists. The term political science, political theory and political philosophy are not exactly identical and a distinction can be made among them. This differentiation were emerged because of the rise of modern science, that brought about a general shift in intellectual perceptions where as political science tries to provide plausible generalisation and laws about politics and political behaviour, political theory reflects upon political phenomena and actual political behaviour by subjecting them to philosophical or ethical criteria. It considers the question of the best political order, which is the part of a larger and more fundamental question, namely the ideal form of life that an individual should lead in a larger community. But it should be kept in mind that there is no tension between political theory and political science as they differ in terms of their boundaries and jurisdiction but not in their aim. Political theory supplies idea, concepts and theories for purpose of analysis, descriptions, explanation and criticism, which in turn are incorporated in political science.

Political theory helps in explaining the history of political thought, use of technique of analysis, conceptual clarification and formal model building and there by can be termed as theoretical political science. In a nutshell, it can be said that political theory is theoretical, scientific as well as philosophical and at the same time dynamic with a clear objective of attaining a better social order. It is an unique synthesis of the elements of 'theory', 'science', philosophy' and 'ideology' and 'thought'.

1.3 THE CLASSICAL TRADITION OF POLITICAL THEORY

The growth and evolution of political theory can be elaborated in three major streams. These are:

(i) classical political theory,

(ii) modern political theory, and

(iii) contemporary political theory.

The principal element which divides the classical or the traditional political theory from the modern is 'science'. Philosophy dominates the classical tradition of political theory whereas science and its methodology dominate the modernist. The classical tradition can be traced backed to the ancient Greek period. It flourished in the writings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The classical tradition from these days lasted up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. A distinctive aspect of the history of political theory is the large

Check Your Progress

1. What is political theory?
2. What is political ideology?

number of classics known for their comprehensiveness, logical consistency and clarity. These works rightly described as 'classics' address both local issues and contain principles of universal significance. They offer rival conceptual frameworks which enable us to choose and state our preference. The principal subjects of classics deals with the characteristic of human nature, functions and organisation of political authority, political change and stability. During the periods of acute crisis or great transition, the classics in political theory are generally emerged. They usually flourish in an age of transition from one era to another when a great churning occurs and issues are debated and discussed. The crisis by itself does not produce; instead it acts as a catalyst. However, there may be exceptions, for example, Indian society in the seventeenth and eighteenth century witness tumultuous changes marked by crises and tresses did not yield any political theory. Therefore, a crisis has to be understood in the context of a framework of political values and institutional arrangements. The quest for a good life and good society, optimism and hope are the major inputs in a worthwhile project in political theory so far as the classical tradition is concern. The text of a political theory has also to be understood with reference to a specific situation in order to comprehend the contents of political philosophy of that period. A political theorist turns to a past with a view to analysing the present and foreseeing the future. It is this defining element that makes a political tract of a particular period a master piece. Though there may be different reaction to a particular situation, one could also find similarities in the responses patterns. The greatest political theories are those that have dealt with the immediate situation and issues effectively while suggesting lessons which are valid for other times as well. Thus, the relevance of classical works is perennial. The great classics were composed by political exiles or by failed politicians like Plato, Machiavelli, Hugo Grotious, Sir John Fortescue, Hobbes and Locke. Sometimes political theory emerged out of a revolution or indication of an impending one. Plato and Aristotle sought to recreate the magic and pre-eminence of the Greek city state which were fast fading into the past. Besides Italian unification Machiavelli focused on the various dimension of the newly emerging commercial society. Hobbes and Locke addressed questions relating to crises of political authority in times of civil war.

Sheldon Wolin identifies some principal characteristics of classical tradition which can be mentioned as below:

(i) It sought to identify the politics with the public.

(ii) It aimed at acquiring reliable knowledge about matters concerning the people.

(iii) It laid emphasis on order, balance, equilibrium, harmony and stability.

(iv) It tried to project an ideal form of government

(v) It laid stress on comparative studies and deal with concepts like law, citizenship, justice and participation

(vi) It was largely ethical in perspective.

The classics in political theory give us explanation about politics, its meaning and value. Besides being influential a classic in political theory contains a wealth of information, ideas and values that cumulatively enriches human thought and action. A great theorist is one who articulate logically with rigger, insight and subtle nuances of the dilemma of his age, and dissects the problems that confront the generation to which he belongs. He stands out among his contemporaries not so much for originality of ideas rather rare in human thought bought for the inclusiveness, clarity and power of the doctrine(s). Every age is characterised by its own problems and dilemmas and classical works deals with these situations. But such localism should not be considered as a hindrance to the essential

richness of a classic as demonstrated by Aristotle politics, which justified the prejudices of its time (like slavery), but was able to offer brilliant insights into the basic issues of politics, like stability, revolutionary change, the importance of family and property in sustaining the state. George H. Sabine identifies two major periods when classical period of political theory flourished. First period was during Plato and Aristotle in fifth century B.C. and second in during the English civil war of 1641 till the glorious revolution of 1688 in the 17th century when Hobbes and Locke were the two outstanding theorist who contributed to the political theory. Sabine links fundamental developments in political theory to the shifts that take place from one set of formation to another. In another words, innovation in political theory occurs when the older institution becomes inoperative and a newer one emerge. Crisis and tumultuous changes have a catalytic effect on political theory. Germino pointed out that there are certain characteristics of an authentic political theory which is common to all classics from Plato to Hegel. These are openness, theoretical intention, focus on universal perennial problems, realism, acknowledging the limits of knowledge and intellectual honesty and integrity. Another political thinker Hacker points out that great classical works in the political theory should be preserved. These great books, according to him are relevant not only to the period in which it is written but also into the contemporary times. He has given a classification of great classical books into ten categories which can be mentioned below:

(a) Capital and carbumcles-Essentially biographical in nature.

(b) Hero worshipers-Takes into account all the writings of a single author.

(c) Intellectual plagiarism-Tell us of the indebtedness of a theorist to his predecessors and contemporaries.

(d) Who said it first-For example Aristotle was the father of political science.

(e) The mind readers-Gives us an idea of what the theorist really desired to convey.

(f) The camera eye-Offers us the thoughts some had during certain historical period.

(g) Influencing the intelligencia-Is similar to intellectual plagiarism, with the difference that some theorist like Bosanquet becomes important because of Hegel and Greens influence on his writings.

(h) Influencing the masses-Directly linked to political events.

(i) The logic book-Logical in nature.

(j) Timelessness-Explains the continuing relevance of the classics.

However, the classical tradition is not free from its limitations. Hegel rightly point out that every thinker is a child of his time and this is reflected in their perception too. For instance, Plato and Aristotle addressed to the situations in which they lived. There contribution was forgotten in the immediate context of the post-Aristotelian philosophies of stoicism, Epicureanism and cynicism. Machiavelli prescription could not anticipate the reformation in the Christian church. Thomas Hobbes portrait of the human nature to be universal was not correct. Hegel glorified the state at the cost of civil society. Marx's criticism of capitalism has also its limitations. J.S.Mill also miscalculated that representative democracy will be successful everywhere except backward and/ or heterogeneous societies. Thus, every thinker and classical works has its own shortcomings.

The classical tradition is also criticised for its gender biasness. Many of the great political scientists have either ignored or dismissed the position and status of women. Many of them have retreated, justified and defended women's subordination on the alleged natural and biological differences between the sexes, and have also pointed to

NOTES

the inherent physical and mental superiority of the male. For example the philosopher like Aristotle, Rousseau and Hegel contained that a women's rightful place is her home, and that being burden with household chores. She did not have sufficient time for politics, philosophy, art or science. In a nutshell, they portrayed and reinforce the stereotype image of the women. Another criticism of the great classical tradition is its eurocentricism. Many of the political scientists of the great classical tradition were also Eurocentric and dismissed non western civilisation as unchanging and unhistorical.

Once David Easton pointed out that there has been no outstanding political philosopher after Marx and J.S. Mill. However, since, the seventies there have been in resurgence in political theory largely due to the efforts of Hobermass, Nozick and Rawls. The theme that figure prominently since its revival are broadly social justice and welfare rights theory within a deontological perspective, utilitarianism, democratic theory and pluralism feminism, post modernism, new social movements and civil society, and the liberalism-the communitarian debate.

1.4 SCIENCE OF POLITICS-POSITIVISM AND LOGICAL POSITIVISM

Political science is the study of political intuitions, constitutions and policy processes. Political science aims at an accurate description and explanation of these features of politics. It is an empirical (positive) science in terms that it seeks to collect data and analyses it much as a natural scientist would collect a sample and put it under the microscope. The accuracy of an empirical claim can be tested against what is out there in the world. The empirical study of institutions and laws is a vital part of any study of politics. If political science asks 'what are the key building blocks of politics?' Political theory may ask 'why are these the key building blocks of politics? If political science identifies human-rights legislation as a key feature of contemporary politics, political theory might ask 'is this just?' The scholars like Arthur Benntley (The Process of Government), George Catlin (The Science and method of Politics), David Easton (The Political System), Robert Dahl (Modern Political Analysis) and others have treated political theory as a science. However all science is not political theory, just as all political theory is not science. Political theory is not an exact science like natural or physical science. In political theory unlike natural science there are no universally recognised principles, no clear cause-effect relationships, no laboratories and no prediction can be made. It can only be termed as a science so far as it admits concepts and norms which are both observable and testable and in so far as it responds to the requirements of reason and rationalism. In the 1950's onwards the American political scientists in general and behaviourists in particular sought to crate a science of politics and indulged in the process of reductionism. Political theory can be termed as a science so far as it can be applied to a social gathering and the definitive rules of the exact sciences are applicable within the limitations as in any social science. It is only a social science. So far as its methodology and its analysis is concerned it can be called a science. Colin Hay in his work political analysis rightly points out that political theory admits objectivity in association with subjectivity facts in relation to values, research together with theory. Political theory as science generates neutral, dispassionate and objective knowledge.

Present-day scientific method is fundamentally a product of empirical and logical approaches to knowledge. The story of its genesis is, therefore, at least until the end of the nineteenth century, identical with the general history of logic and empiricism. The empirical approach has never been entirely absent from the struggle for knowledge. But

Check Your Progress

3. Name the three streams that can elaborate the growth and evolution of political theory.
4. List some of the principal characteristics of classical tradition, as identified by Sheldon Wolin.

NOTES

it was often grossly neglected, especially in the Middle Ages, and always had to fight for recognition against tradition, superstitions, the dogmatic influences of religion, and the pseudo-authority of allegedly self-evident a-priori principles. Only after a long period of coexistence did the empirical approach begin to crowd out all others from the field for which the name 'science' was claimed.

In the political field, however this development gained momentum under the influence of Locke and Hume, of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and later, of the positivist and pragmatist schools.

Scientific objectivity is a standard we are all familiar with (at least in principle). The idea is that we can establish, through the application of scientific methods of data collection and analysis, the verifiable truth. Between the 1920s and 1970s the scientific paradigm, the belief that all that counted as knowledge had to be scientific, came to be imposed upon the social sciences and humanities the claims popular around this time were that we had left our religious and metaphysical infancy and developed science. Thus two thousands years of philosophical and normative thought were dismissed. This quirk of intellectual history went beyond empirical study to make claims about the very nature and possibility of knowledge. These debates, called epistemological debates (from the Greek episteme, meaning knowledge) are key to political theory.

1.4.1 Positivism

The meaning of the term positivism in matters of law and justice differs from that associated with the same term in science, general philosophy, and sociology. Political theory is caught between these two vocabularies. In a sociological sense, Auguste Comte (1798–1875) introduced the term into the social sciences. He used it to distinguish the 'scientific' approach in the 'positivistic' era from 'metaphysical' and 'theological' speculations in the two preceding epochs. His ideas about what constituted a scientific approach were in many respects similar to those of present day scientific method, but not identical. August Comte absolutised progress and science. According to him, progress or progressive evolution was an ultimate law governing historic phenomena, and science a human activity able to solve all social problems, not excluding moral ones.

Positivism refers to a set of epistemological perspectives and philosophies of science which hold that the scientific method is the best approach to uncover the processes by which both physical and human events occur. Though the positivist approach has been a recurrent theme in the history of western thought from the Ancient Greeks to the present day the concept was developed in the early 19th century by the philosopher and founding sociologist, Auguste Comte.

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) first described the epistemological perspective of positivism in *The Course in Positive Philosophy*, a series of texts published between 1830 and 1842. These texts were followed by the 1844 work, *A General View of Positivism* (published in English in 1865). The first three volumes of the *course* dealt chiefly with the physical sciences already in existence (mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology), whereas the latter two emphasised the inevitable coming of social science. Observing the circular dependence of theory and observation in science, and classifying the sciences in this way, Comte may be regarded as the first philosopher of science in the modern sense of the term. For him, the physical sciences had to arrive first, before humanity could adequately channel its efforts into the most challenging and complex 'Queen Science' of human society itself. His *View of Positivism* therefore set-out to define the empirical goals of sociological method.

NOTES

Comte offered an account of social evolution, proposing that society undergoes three phases in its quest for the truth according to a general 'law of three stages'. The idea bears some similarity to Marx's view that human society would progress toward a communist peak. This is perhaps unsurprising as both were profoundly influenced by the early Utopian socialist, Henri de Saint-Simon, who was at one time Comte's mentor. Both Comte and Marx intended to develop secular-scientific ideologies in the wake of European secularisation. Comte's stages were (1) the *theological*, (2) the *metaphysical*, and (3) the *positive*. The theological phase of man was based on whole-hearted belief in all things with reference to God. God, Comte said, had reigned supreme over human existence pre-enlightenment. Humanity's place in society was governed by its association with the divine presence and with the church. The theological phase deals with mankind accepting the doctrines of the church (or place of worship) rather than relying on its rational powers to explore basic questions about existence. It dealt with the restrictions put in place by the religious organisation at the time and the total acceptance of any 'fact' adduced for society to believe. Comte described the metaphysical phase of humanity as the time since the enlightenment, a time steeped in logical rationalism, to the time right after the French Revolution. This second phase states that the universal rights of humanity are most important. The central idea is that humanity is invested with certain rights that must be respected. In this phase, democracies and dictators rose and fell in attempts to maintain the innate rights of humanity.

The final stage of the trilogy of Comte's universal law is the scientific or positive stage. The central idea of this phase is that individual rights are more important than the rule of any one person. Comte stated that the idea of humanity's ability to govern itself makes this stage innately different from the rest. There is no higher power governing the masses and the intrigue of any one person can achieve anything based on that individual's free will and authority. The third principle is most important in the positive stage. Comte called these three phases the universal rule in relation to society and its development. Neither the second nor the third phase can be reached without the completion and understanding of the preceding stage. All stages must be completed in progress.

Comte believed that the appreciation of the past and the ability to build on it towards the future was key in transitioning from the theological and metaphysical phases. The idea of progress was central to Comte's new science, sociology. Sociology would 'lead to the historical consideration of every science' because 'the history of one science, including pure political history, would make no sense unless it was attached to the study of the general progress of all of humanity'. As Comte would say, 'from science comes prediction; from prediction comes action'. It is a philosophy of human intellectual development that culminated in science. The irony of this series of phases is that though Comte attempted to prove that human development has to go through these three stages, it seems that the positivist stage is far from becoming a realization. This is due to two truths. The positivist phase requires having complete understanding of the universe and world around us and requires that society should never know if it is in this positivist phase. Anthony Giddens argues that since humanity constantly uses science to discover and research new things, humanity never progresses beyond the second metaphysical phase. In this view, Comte's positivism appears circular.

Comte's fame today owes in part to Emile Littré, who founded *The Positivist Review* in 1867. As an approach to the philosophy of history, positivism was appropriated by historians such as Hippolyte Taine. Many of Comte's writings were translated into English by the Whig writer, Harriet Martineau, regarded by some as the first female sociologist. Debates continue to rage as to how much Comte appropriated from the

work of his mentor, Saint-Simon. He was nevertheless influential; Brazilian thinkers turned to Comte's ideas about training scientific elite in order to flourish in the industrialisation process. Brazil's national motto, *Ordem e Progresso* (Order and Progress) was taken from Comte's positivism, which was also influential in Poland.

NOTES

In later life, Comte developed a 'religion of humanity' for positivist societies in order to fulfill the cohesive function once held by traditional worship. In 1849, he proposed a calendar reform called the 'positivist calendar'. For close associate John Stuart Mill, it was possible to distinguish between a 'good Comte' (the author of the *Course in Positive Philosophy*) and a 'bad Comte' (the author of the secular-religious *system*). The *system* was unsuccessful but met with the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* to influence the proliferation of various secular humanist organizations in the 19th century, especially through the work of secularists such as George Holyoake and Richard Congreve. Although Comte's English followers, including George Eliot and Harriet Martineau, for the most part rejected the full gloomy panoply of his system, they liked the idea of a religion of humanity and his injunction to 'vivre pour autrui' ('live for others', from which comes the word 'altruism')

The early sociology of Herbert Spencer came about broadly as a reaction to Comte; writing after various developments in evolutionary biology, Spencer attempted (in vain) to reformulate the discipline in what we might now describe as socially Darwinistic terms. (Spencer was in actual fact a proponent of Lamarckism rather than Darwinism).

Comte is regarded as the father of positivism. His main contribution is the positivisation of the social sciences. Auguste Comte assorted that only sense-experience was real. He rules out the use of metaphysical, ethical and theological theories. According to him, positivism gives emphasis on precision, constructive power and relativism. Comte also spoke at length, about the term 'relativity' many times. According to him, all concepts which had been regarded as absolute under theological and metaphysical theories had become relative under the positivistic approach. By 1900, under the leadership of Emile Durkeheim (1858–1917), French sociologists adhered more strictly now to scientific method than Comte and his immediate disciples had done. But they did not, as a rule, engage in original inquiries into the basic philosophical and methodological problem of whether it was possible to establish moral judgments with scientific means. Their primary interest was the descriptive investigation of sociological facts and their secondary interest was the explanation of these facts by tracing them to scientifically determinable sociological and psychological causes. These inquires led them, of course, to a relativistic emphasis on local and temporal differences in ethical systems. Auguste Comte reviewed the development of sciences with a view to ascertaining the thesis of unity among the sciences, natural and social, whereby they could be integrated into a single system of knowledge. With the idea of a unified science he founded sociology in the belief that scientific knowledge offered the requisite clues for control for both nature and society. Positivism with the help of three tools of analysis, namely empiricism, unity of science and control focused itself on society in general, in the hope of overcoming the existing malaise and realizing a better future.

Positivism asserts that the only authentic knowledge is that which is based on sense, experience and positive verification. As an approach to the philosophy of science deriving from enlightenment thinkers such as Henri de Saint-Simon and Pierre-Simon Laplace, Auguste Comte saw the scientific method as replacing metaphysics the history of thought, observing the circular dependence of theory and observation in science. Sociological positivism was later reformulated by Émile Durkheim as a foundation to

NOTES

social research. At the turn of the 20th century the first wave of German sociologists, including Max Weber and Georg Simmel, rejected the doctrine, thus founding the antipositivist tradition in sociology. Later antipositivists and critical theorists have associated positivism with 'scientism'; science *as ideology*.

The key features of positivism as of the 1950s, as defined in the 'received view', are:

1. A focus on science as a product, a linguistic or numerical set of statements;
2. A concern with axiomatization, that is, with demonstrating the logical structure and coherence of these statements;
3. An insistence on atleast some of these statements being testable, that is amenable to being verified, confirmed or falsified by the empirical observation of reality; statements that would, by their nature, be regarded as untestable included the teleological; thus positivism rejects much of classical metaphysics.
4. The belief that science is markedly cumulative;
5. The belief that science is predominantly transcultural;
6. The belief that science rests on specific results that are dissociated from the personality and social position of the investigator;
7. The belief that science contains theories or research traditions that are largely commensurable;
8. The belief that science sometimes incorporates new ideas that are discontinuous from old ones;
9. The belief that science involves the idea of the unity of science, that there is, underlying the various scientific disciplines, basically one science about one real world.

Positivism is elsewhere defined as 'the view that all true knowledge is scientific,' and that all things are ultimately measurable. Positivism is closely related to reductionism, in that both involve the view that 'entities of one kind . . . are reducible to entities of another,' such as societies to configurations of individuals, or mental events to neural phenomena. It also involves the contention that 'processes are reducible to physiological, physical or chemical events,' and even that 'social processes are reducible to relationships between and actions of individuals,' or that 'biological organisms are reducible to physical systems.'

While most social scientists today are not explicit about their epistemological commitments, articles in top American sociology and political science journals generally follow a positivist logic of argument. It can be thus argued that 'natural science and social science [research articles] can therefore be regarded with a good deal of confidence as members of the same genre.

The modern academic discipline of sociology began with the work of Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). While Durkheim rejected much of the detail of Comte's philosophy, he retained and refined its method maintaining that the social sciences are a logical continuation of the natural ones into the realm of human activity and insisting that they may retain the same objectivity, rationalism, and approach to causality. Durkheim set up the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895, publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895). In this text he argued 'our main goal is to extend scientific rationalism to human conduct . . . What has been called our positivism is but a consequence of this rationalism.'

NOTES

Durkheim's seminal monograph, *Suicide* (1897), a case study of suicide rates amongst Catholic and Protestant populations, distinguished sociological analysis from psychology or philosophy. By carefully examining suicide statistics in different police districts, he attempted to demonstrate that catholic communities have a lower suicide rate than that of protestants, something he attributed to social (as opposed to individual or psychological) causes. He developed the notion of objective *suis generis* 'social facts' to delineate a unique empirical object for the science of sociology to study. Through such studies he posted that sociology would be able to determine whether any given society is 'healthy' or 'pathological', and seek social reform to negate organic breakdown or 'social anomie'. For Durkheim, sociology could be described as the 'science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning'.

Accounts of Durkheim's positivism are vulnerable to exaggeration and oversimplification: Comte was the only major sociological thinker to postulate that the social realm may be subject to scientific analysis in exactly the same way as natural science, whereas Durkheim saw a far greater need for developing a distinctly sociological scientific methodology. His lifework was fundamental in the establishment of practical social research as we know it today—techniques which continue beyond sociology and form the basis for methodology in other social sciences, such as political science, as well in market research and further fields.

The supporter of positivism divides the analytical statements about the physical or social world into three categories:

(a) Such statements can be useful tautologies, meaning repeating the same things through different words and purely definitional statements that give specific meaning to a particular concept or phenomena;

(b) Statements are to be empirically tested by observation to access their truth or falsity;

(c) Statements that did not fall into the afforest categories and lacked analytic content had to be dropped.

In a nutshell, the positivist argues meaningful analysis is possible only through useful tautologies and empirical statements. This rules out metaphysics, theology, aesthetics and ethics because they merely introduced obscurity into the process of enquiry. The principle aim of positivism is to be 'value free' or 'ethically neutral'. In this regard it patterns itself on the natural sciences in deciding about the right and wrong of issues. Positivism give emphasis on empiricism which believed that observation and experience as sources of knowledge.

In a nutshell, positivism relies on scientific method as the only source of true knowledge. It rejects superstition, religion and metaphysics as pre-scientific forms of thought. It holds that all knowledge is ultimately based on sense-experience. Hence empirical method must be adopted for any genuine inquiry in the field of social sciences as well as physical sciences.

In contemporary social science, strong accounts of positivism have long since fallen out of favour. Practitioners of positivism today acknowledge in far greater detail observer bias and structural limitations. Modern positivists generally eschew metaphysical concerns in favour of methodological debates concerning clarity, replicability, reliability and validity. This positivism is generally equated with 'quantitative research' and thus carries no explicit theoretical or philosophical commitments. The institutionalization of this kind of sociology is often credited to Paul Lazarsfeld, who pioneered large-scale

NOTES

survey studies and developed statistical techniques for analyzing them. This approach lends itself to what Robert K. Merton called middle-range theory: abstract statements that generalize from segregated hypotheses and empirical regularities rather than starting with an abstract idea of a social whole. Other new movements, such as critical realism, have emerged to reconcile the overarching aims of social science with various so-alled 'postmodern' critiques.

Historically, positivism has been criticized for its universalism, i.e. for contending that all 'processes are reducible to physiological, physical or chemical events', 'social processes are reducible to relationships between and actions of individuals,' and that 'biological organisms are reducible to physical systems'.

Max Horkheimer and other critical theorists criticized the classic formulation of positivism on two grounds. First, they claimed that it falsely represented human social action. The first criticism argued that positivism systematically failed to appreciate the extent to which the so-called social facts it yielded did not exist 'out there' in the objective world but were themselves a product of socially and historically mediated human consciousness. Positivism ignored the role of the 'observer' in the constitution of social reality and thereby failed to consider the historical and social conditions affecting the representation of social ideas. Positivism falsely represented the object of study by reifying social reality as existing objectively and independently and labor actually produced those conditions. Secondly, he argued, representation of social reality produced by positivism was inherently and artificially conservative, helping to support the status quo, rather than challenging it. This character may also explain the popularity of positivism in certain political circles. Horkheimer argued, in contrast, that critical theory possessed a reflexive element lacking in the positivistic traditional theory.

Few scholars today hold the views critiqued in Horkheimer's work. Since the time of his writing, critiques of positivism, especially from philosophy of science, have led to the development of postpositivism. This philosophy greatly relaxes the epistemological commitments of logical positivism and no longer asserts the separation of the knower and the known. Rather than dismissing the scientific project outright, post-positivists seek to transform and amend it, though the exact extent of their affinity for science varies vastly. For example, some post-positivists accept the critique that observation is always value-laden, but argue that the best values to adopt for sociological observation are those of science: skepticism, rigor and modesty. Just as some critical theorists see their position as a moral commitment to egalitarian values; these post-positivists see their methods as driven by a moral commitment to these scientific values. Such scholars may see themselves as either positivists or anti-positivists.

Positivism has also come under fire on religious and philosophical grounds whose proponents assert that truth begins in sense experience but does not end there. Positivism fails to prove that there are not abstract ideas, laws, and principles beyond particular observable facts and relationships and necessary principles or that we cannot know them. Nor does it prove that material and corporeal things constitute the whole order of existing beings and that our knowledge is limited to them. According to positivism our abstract concepts or general ideas are mere collective representations of the experimental order—for example, the idea of 'man' is a kind of blended image of all the men observed in our experience. This runs contrary to a Platonic or Christian ideal, where an idea can be abstracted from any concrete determination, and may be applied identically to an indefinite number of objects of the same class. From the idea's perspective, the latter is more precise as collective images are more or less confused, become more so as the collection represented increases; an idea by definition remains always clear.

NOTES

Echoes of the positivist and anti-positivist debate persist today, though this conflict is hard to define. Authors writing in different epistemological perspectives do not phrase their disagreements in the same terms and rarely actually speak directly to each other. To complicate the issues further, few practicing scholars explicitly state their epistemological commitments, and their epistemological position thus has to be guessed from other sources such as choice of methodology or theory. However, no perfect correspondence between these categories exists, and many scholars critiqued as positivists actually hold post-positivist views. One scholar has described this debate in terms of the social construction of the 'other', with each side defining the 'other' by what it is *not* rather than what it *is*, and then proceeding to attribute far greater homogeneity to their opponents than actually exists. Thus, it is better to understand this not as a debate but as two different arguments: the anti-positivist articulation of a social meta-theory which includes a philosophical critique of scientism and positivist development of a scientific research methodology for sociology with accompanying critiques of the reliability and validity of work that they see as violating such standards.

Anti-positivism (also non-positivist or interpretive sociology) is the view in social science that academics must necessarily reject empiricism and the scientific method in the conduct of social theory and research. Anti-positivism relates to various historical debates in the philosophy and sociology of science. In modern practice however non-positivism may be equated with qualitative research methods, while positivist research is more quantitative. Positivists typically use research methods such as experiments and statistical surveys, while anti-positivists use research methods which rely more on unstructured interviews or participant observation. Currently, positivist and non-positivist methods are often combined.

In the early 19th century various intellectuals, perhaps most notably the Hegelians, began to question the prospect of empirical social analysis. Karl Marx died before the establishment of formal social science but nonetheless fiercely rejected Comtean sociological positivism (despite himself attempting to establish a historical materialist 'science of society'). The enhanced positivism presented by Durkheim would serve to found modern academic sociology and s ocial research yet retained many of the mechanical elements of its predecessor. Hermeneuticians such as Wilhelm Dilthey theorised in detail on the distinction between natural and social science ('Geisteswissenschaft'), whilst neo-Kantian philosophers such as Heinrich Rickert maintained that the social realm with its abstract meanings and symbolisms is inconsistent with scientific methods of analysis. Edmund Husserl, meanwhile, negated positivism through the rubric of phenomenology. At the turn of the 20th century, the first wave of German sociologists formally introduced *verstehende* sociological anti-positivism, proposing research should concentrate on human cultural norms, values, symbols, and social processes viewed from a resolutely subjective perspective. Max Weberargued sociology may be loosely described as a 'science' as it is able to methodologically identify causal relationships of human 'social action'—especially among ideal types, or hypothetical simplifications of complex social phenomena. As a non-positivist, however, one seeks relationships that are not as 'historical, invariant, or generalizable' as those pursued by natural scientists.

Ferdinand Tönnies discussed Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (*community* and *society*) as the two normal types of human association. For the anti-positivists, reality cannot be explained without *concepts*. Tönnies drew a sharp line between the realm of conceptuality and the reality of social action: the first must be treated axiomatically and in a deductive way ('pure' sociology), whereas the second empirically and in an inductive

NOTES

way ('applied' sociology). The interaction between theory (or constructed concepts) and data is always fundamental in social science and this subjection distinguishes it from physical science. Durkheim himself noted the importance of constructing concepts in the abstract (e.g. 'collective consciousness' and 'social anomie') in order to form workable categories for experimentation. Both Weber and Georg Simmel pioneered theverstehen (or 'interpretative') approach toward social science; a systematic process in which an outside observer attempts to relate to a particular cultural group, or indigenous people, on their own terms and from their own point of view.

Through the work of Simmel, sociology acquired a possible character beyond positivist data-collection or grand, deterministic systems of structural law. Relatively isolated from the sociological academy throughout his lifetime, Simmel presented idiosyncratic analyses of modernity more reminiscent of the phenomenological and existential writers than of Comte or Durkheim, paying particular concern to the forms of, and possibilities for social individuality. His sociology engaged in a neo-Kantian critique of the limits of human perception. One may say Michel Foucault's critiques of the human sciences take Kantian skepticism to its extreme over half a century later.

Anti-positivism thus holds there is no methodological unity of the sciences: the three goals of positivism *description, control, and prediction* are incomplete, since they lack any understanding. Some argue even if positivism were correct it would be dangerous. Science aims at understanding causality so control can be exerted. If this succeeded in sociology, those with knowledge would be able to control the ignorant and this could lead to social engineering. The perspective, however, has led to controversy over how one can draw the line between subjective and objective research, much less draw an artificial line between environment and human organization (*see* environmental sociology) and influenced the study of hermeneutics. The base concepts of anti-positivism have expanded beyond the scope of social science, in fact, phenomenology has the same basic principles at its core. Simply put positivists see sociology as a science while anti-positivists don't. Positivists like Popper argue that sociology can be scientific by following scientific procedures, while anti-positivists like Kuhn argues that sociology cannot be a science since sociologists don't agree on one accepted paradigm.

The non-positivist tradition continued in the establishment of critical theory, particularly the work associated with the so-called Frankfurt School of Social Research. Anti-positivism would be further facilitated by rejections of 'scientism'; or science *as ideology*. Jürgen Habermas argues in his *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (1967) that 'the positivist thesis of unified science which assimilates all the sciences to a natural-scientific model fails because of the intimate relationship between the social sciences and history and the fact that they are based on a situation-specific understanding of meaning that can be explicated only hermeneutically . . . access to a symbolically pre-structured reality cannot be gained by observation alone.'

Quantitative research nevertheless remains ubiquitous and produces data of some workable validity and reliability for social and market researchers, businesses, governments, and so forth; a national census being a good example. In philosophy and models of scientific inquiry post positivism (also called *postempiricism*) is a meta-theoretical stance that critiques and amends positivism. Post-positivists believe that human knowledge is based not on unchallengeable rock-solid foundations but rather upon human *conjectures*. As human knowledge is thus unavoidably conjectural, the assertion of these conjectures is *warranted*, or more specifically, justified by a set of *warrants*, which can be modified or withdrawn in the light of further investigation. However, post-positivism is not a form of relativism, and generally retains the idea of objective truth.

NOTES

One of the first thinkers to critique positivism was Sir Karl Popper. He advanced falsification, a critique to the logical positivist idea of verifiability. Falsificationism argues that it is impossible to verify that a belief is true, though it is possible to reject false beliefs if they are phrased in a way amenable to falsification. Thomas Kuhn's idea of paradigm shifts offers a stronger critique of positivism, arguing that it is not simply individual theories but whole worldviews that must occasionally shift in response to evidence. Post-positivism is an amendment to positivism that recognizes these and other critiques against logical positivism. It is not a rejection of the scientific method but rather its reformation to meet these critiques. It preserves the basic assumptions of positivism: ontological realism, the possibility and desirability of objective truth and the use of experimental methodology. Post-positivism of this type is common in the social sciences (especially sociology) for both practical and conceptual reasons.

1.4.2 Logical Positivism or Neo-positivism

Logical positivism (later and more accurately called logical empiricism) is a school of philosophy that combines empiricism, the idea that observational evidence is indispensable from knowledge of the world with a version of rationalism, the idea that our knowledge includes a component that is not derived from observation.

Logical Positivism (also known as logical empiricism or logical neopositivism) was a philosophical movement risen in Austria and Germany in 1920s, primarily concerned with the logical analysis of scientific knowledge which affirmed that statements about metaphysics, religion, and ethics are void of cognitive meaning and thus nothing but expression of feelings or desires; only statements about mathematics, logic and natural sciences have a definite meaning. Its members included Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970), considered the leading figure of logical positivism, Herbert Feigl (1902–88), Philipp Frank (1884–1966), Kurt Grelling (1886–1942), Hans Hahn (1879–1934), Carl Gustav Hempel (1905–97), Victor Kraft (1880–1975), Otto Neurath (1882–1945), Hans Reichenbach (1891–1953), Moritz Schlick (1882–1936), Friedrich Waismann (1896–1959).

Einstein's theory of relativity exerted a great influence over the origin of logical positivism. Logical positivists were very interested in clarifying the philosophical significance of the theory of relativity. Schlick wrote in 1915 and 1917 two essays on relativity, Reichenbach attended Einstein's lectures on the theory of relativity at Berlin University in 1917 and wrote in 1920s four books on relativity, and Carnap's first work was an essay about the theory of space published in 1922. Also quantum mechanics was a major subject of philosophical investigations. Works about quantum mechanics were published by Schlick and Reichenbach. Another influence over logical positivism was exerted by the development of formal logic. Carnap attended three courses on logic under the direction of Gottlob Frege, the father of modern logic. Logical positivism had extensive contacts with the group of Polish logicians (mainly Jan Lukasiewicz, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, and Alfred Tarski) which developed several branches of contemporary logic like the algebra of logic, many-valued propositional calculus and the semantics for logic. In 1930s logical positivism was a prominent philosophical movement known in USA and Europe, very active in advertising its new philosophical ideas. Several meetings on epistemology and philosophy of science were organized: Prague (1929), Konigsberg (1930), where Kurt Godel presented the theorems asserting the completeness of first-order predicate calculus and the incompleteness of formal arithmetic, and Prague (1934). The First Congress of Scientific Philosophy was held in Paris (1935), followed by Copenhagen (1936), Paris (1937), Cambridge, U.K. (1938), and Cambridge, Mass. (1939). The political attitudes of logical positivists were progressive, democratic and sometimes

NOTES

socialist and aroused the hostility from Nazism. After Hitler seizure of power in 1933, many logical positivists were persecuted and forced to emigrate from Austria and Germany; two of them (Schlick and Grelling) were murdered. Neurath and Waismann sought refuge in England. USA became the new home for Carnap 1(he taught at the University of Chicago and at the University of California at Los Angeles), Feigl (University of Iowa and University of Minnesota), Frank (Harvard University), Hempel (Yale University, Princeton University and University of Pittsburgh), and Reichenbach (University of California at Los Angeles).

Logical positivism grew from the discussions of a group called the 'First Vienna Circle' which gathered at the Café Central before World War I. After the war Hans Hahn, a member of that early group helped bring Moritz Schlick to Vienna. Schlick's Vienna Circle along with Hans Reichenbach's Berlin Circle propagated the new doctrines more widely in the 1920s and early 1930s. It was Otto Neurath's advocacy that made the movement self-conscious and more widely known. A 1929 pamphlet written by Neurath, Hahn, and Rudolf Carnap summarized the doctrines of the Vienna Circle at that time. These included: the opposition to all metaphysics, especially ontology and synthetic a priori propositions; the rejection of metaphysics not as wrong but as having no meaning; a criterion of meaning based on Ludwig Wittgenstein's early work; the idea that all knowledge should be codifiable in a single standard language of science; and above all the project of 'rational reconstruction,' in which ordinary-language concepts were gradually to be replaced by more precise equivalents in that standard language. In the early 1930s, the Vienna Circle dispersed, mainly because of fascist persecution and the untimely deaths of Hans Hahn and Schlick. The most prominent proponents of logical positivism emigrated to the United Kingdom and to the United States where they considerably influenced American philosophy. Until the 1950s logical positivism was the leading school in the philosophy of science. After moving to the United States, Carnap proposed a replacement for the earlier doctrines in his *Logical Syntax of Language*. This change of direction and the somewhat differing views of Reichenbach and others led to a consensus that the English name for the shared doctrinal platform, in its American exile from the late 1930s, should be 'logical empiricism'.

Logical positivism is also known as neo-positivism. It is a revitalized form of positivism appeared in the 1920s and 1930s and espoused by Vienna Circle. Some twentieth-century positivists, variously called neo-positivists or logical positivists have gone to the logical extreme of positivism. Starting from the postulate that scientific inquiry should be based exclusively on what is given to perception and on strictly logical reasoning, they have made it their particular business to draw the severest conclusions there from. This led them or a group of them beyond scientific method as here understood to a more radical position, characterized –at least in the movement's early years by three specific features:

(i) insistence on strictly 'physicalist' or behaviourist methods, which imply the rejection of any merely introspective sources of psychology;

(ii) elimination of metaphysical terms not only in the final stages of scientific work, but in any type of sentences, and hence especially also in preparatory steps, where they are merely used as inspiration for the formulation of problems, as working hypotheses, or as avowed assumptions; (c) designation of any synthetic sentence which is not ultimately verifiable through perceptions as not only 'non-scientific' but 'meaningless'.

Only statements that can by expressed in physicalist, behaviourist language had 'meaning' to the radical wing of the neo-positivists led by Rudolf Carnap and Otto Neurath. Their theoretical ideal was that all scientific propositions should be so expressed.

NOTES

In the early 20th century, logical positivism—a descendant of Comte's basic thesis but an independent movement—sprang up in Vienna and grew to become one of the dominant schools in Anglo-American philosophy and the analytic tradition. Logical positivists (or 'neo positivists') reject metaphysical speculation and attempt to reduce statements and propositions to pure logic. Critiques of this approach by philosophers such as Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn have been highly influential and led to the development of post positivism. In psychology, the positivist movement was influential in the development of behavioralism and operationalism. In economics, practising researchers tend to emulate the methodological assumptions of classical positivism but only in a de-facto fashion: the majority of economists do not explicitly concern themselves with matters of epistemology. In jurisprudence, 'legal positivism' essentially refers to the rejection of natural law, thus its common meaning with philosophical positivism is somewhat attenuated and in recent generations generally emphasizes the authority of human political structures as opposed to a 'scientific' view of law.

According to logical positivism, all meaningful statements can be divided in two classes, one containing the statements that are true or false in virtue of their logical forms or in virtue of their meaning (these statements are called analytic a priori), the other containing the statements whose truth or falsity can be ascertained only by means of the experience (called synthetic a posteriori). Logic and mathematics belong to the class of analytic a priori statements, since they are true in virtue of the meaning ascribed to the logical constants (the words 'and', 'or', 'not', 'if') and to the mathematical terms. The class of synthetic a posteriori statements includes all genuine scientific statements, like those of physics, biology, psychology. A statement is meaningful if and only if it can be proved true or false, at least in principle, by means of the experience or in virtue of its meaning. Moreover, the meaning of a statement is its method of verification; that is, we know the meaning of a statement only if we know the conditions under which the statement is true or false (this assertion is called the verifiability principle). Thus statements about metaphysics, religion and ethics are meaningless and must be rejected as nonsensical. Also traditional philosophy is often regarded as meaningless. Many alleged philosophical problems, like the controversy between realists and instrumentalists, are indeed pseudo problems, the outcome of a misuse of language. They do not concern matters of fact, but the choice between different linguistic frameworks. Thus the logical analysis of language was regarded by logical positivism as a major instrument in resolving philosophical problems. Characteristic of this aspect was the intense analysis of scientific language performed by Carnap and Hempel.

A scientific theory, according to logical positivism, is an axiomatic system which acquires an empirical interpretation from suitable statements called coordinative definitions (or principles of coordination or axioms of connection) which establish a correlation between real objects or processes and the abstract concepts of the theory. The language of a scientific theory includes three kinds of terms: logical, observational and theoretical. Logical terms denote the logical constants and the mathematical objects, observational terms denote objects or properties that can be directly observed or measured, and theoretical terms denote objects or properties we cannot observe or measure but we can only infer from direct observations. Examples of theoretical terms are 'electron', 'atom', 'magnetic field'. The early logical positivism believed that all theoretical terms were definable with the help of the observational terms. Further researches, performed by Carnap and Hempel, showed that theoretical terms cannot be defined by observational ones, and thus theoretical terms are indispensable in a scientific theory. Pragmatic aspects of scientific research were not considered by logical positivism which was not interested

NOTES

in the real process of discovering but was concerned with the rational reconstruction of scientific knowledge that is the study of the logical (formal) relationships between statements, hypothesis, and empirical evidence.

The advocates of logical positivism reject traditional metaphysics' cognitive status. They point out that scientific propositions are of two kinds namely analytic and synthetic. They argue that an analytical statement is logical or mathematical in nature where as it is synthetic when a 'propositions add something to the meaning of a given term'. The principal criterion for synthetic or substantial and factual statements is verifiability. A synthetic statement has meaning only if it can be empirically verified. If something is not empirically verified it implies that it cannot be proved to be true or false. In this way it is meaningless. Therefore, logical positivists rejected the traditional political theory as meaningless and unverifiable. They also dwell upon a more radical form of empiricism, namely phenomenalism. Phenomenalism argues that the basis of science is the restricting experience of sensations. Logical positivists give wider emphasis on logical analysis and there aim is to unify the sciences. They point out that experience supplies the subject of all science and helps in formulating laws and theories.

The radical wing of the neo-positivists or logical positivists recognizes only sense experiences in the process of scientific verification. Beginning with the second half of the Nineteen-Thirties, some Neopositivists have abandoned one or another of their original positions. Thus, Moritz Schlick in one of his last papers 'Meaning and Verification' modified the requirement of verifiability for meaningful sentences by interpreting it as requiring only a 'logical' not an empirical possibility of verification. The empirical circumstances, he wrote, are all-important when you want to know if a proposition is true, but they can have no influence on the meaning of the proposition. The only thing necessary for a process of verification to be 'logically' possible, Schlick argued, is that it 'can be described'. Logical possibility or impossibility of verification, therefore, is 'always self-imposed'.

Neo positivism or logical positivism got a thrust in the wake of efforts made by Ernst Mach (1838–1936) to establish the unity of all sciences through the radical elimination of metaphysics in every scientific work and through common recognition that all scientific authority must be ultimately based on perception. Mach was an Austrian physicist and philosopher who held the chair for the philosophy of science at the University of Vienna until 1901. A small group of scholars in Vienna, starting out from Mach's work; attempted to refine it by cleansing it of unwarranted elements and by adding greater logical precision to matches empirical purism and to all its implication; this ended up in their equation of verifiability (testability) and meaning in science. This group, which later came to be known as the 'Vienna Circle' and which made its appearance in 1929 included the mathematician Hans Hahn, the economist Otto Neurath, the physicist Philipp frank, and the philosophers Rudolf Carnap, Herbert Feigl, Friedrich Waismann, and especially, Moritz Schlick. A number of other scholars came to be associated with the Vienna Circle, though not necessarily with all their ideas. Among them were Hans Reichenbach, the mathematicians Ludwig Wittgenstein, Kurt Godel, Karl Menger, and Richard von Mises, the physicist E. Schroedinger, the economist Josef Schumpeter and the lawyer Hans Kelsen. Several Americans including Ernest Nagel of Colombia and Charles W. Morris of the University of Chicago made early contacts with the Circle.

Logical positivism holds that reliable and valid knowledge in any field of inquiry that can be obtained only by empirical method (i.e. observation based on sense-experience) the questions concerning values are beyond the scope of scientific knowledge; hence it

NOTES

is not possible to obtain reliable knowledge about them. Between the 1920s and the 1970s the belief that scientific knowledge was the only true form of knowledge gained huge support. Empiricism became the main stay of logical positivism through the work of the Vienna circle in the 1920s and 1930s as earlier stated. Positivism became further refined in the behaviouralist movements of the 1950s. These hyper-empirical schools of thought argued that scientific verifiability was the sole criterion of knowledge. Finally there were normative utterances which were dismissed as 'ejaculations' or as 'nonsense'. They were treated derisively as they could not be subjected to empirical verification or falsification.

The logical positivism has impacted political science in a significant way. The first and foremost impact is by its principle of verification. It views politics as metaphysical beyond science essentially non-rational and arbitrary. They say it is concerned with what would happen rather then what should happen. This distinguished them from the positivist who attempted to make politics scientific. Another impact of logical positivism is that adopting the various aspects of science. Logical positivists argue that to be scientific means adopting those aspects of science that logical positivism identified as science.

1.5 BEHAVIOURALISM AND POST-BEHAVIOURALISM

Behaviouralism and post-behaviouralism are the two contemporary approaches to the study of politics. The development of the contemporary approach signify a departure from traditional approaches in two aspects: (i) They attempt to establish a separate identity of political science by focusing on the real character of politics; and (ii) they try to understand politics in totality, transcending its formal aspects and looking for those aspects of social life which influence and are influenced by it. Here we will begin the discussion with behaviouralism.

1.5.1 Behaviouralism

Until the middle of the twentieth century, the discipline of political science was primarily qualitative-philosophical, descriptive, legalistic, and typically reliant on case studies that failed to probe causation in any measurable way. The word 'science' was not entirely apt.

In the 1950s, the discipline was transformed by the behavioral revolution spearheaded by advocates of a more social scientific empirical approach. Even though experimentation was the sine qua non of research in the hard sciences and in psychology, the method remained a mere curiosity among political scientists. For behavioralists interested in individual-level political behavior, survey research was the methodology of choice on the grounds that experimentation could not be used to investigate real-world politics (for more detailed accounts of the history of experimental methods in political science). The consensus view was that laboratory settings were too artificial and that experimental subjects were too unrepresentative of any meaningful target population for experimental studies to be valid. Further, many political scientists viewed experiments, which typically necessitate the deception of research subjects as an inherently unethical methodology.

The bias against experimentation began to weaken in the 1970s when the emerging field of political psychology attracted a new constituency for interdisciplinary research.

Check Your Progress

5. What is political science?
6. Define positivism.

NOTES

Laboratory experiments gradually acquired the aura of legitimacy for a small band of scholars working at the intersection of the two disciplines. Most of these scholars focused on the areas of political behavior, public opinion and mass communication, but there were also experimental forays into the fields of international relations and public choice. Initially, these researchers faced significant disincentives to applying experimental methods—most importantly, research based on experiments was unlikely to see the light of day simply because there were no journals or conference venues that took this kind of work seriously.

The first major breakthrough for political scientists interested in applying the experimental method occurred with the founding of the journal 'Experimental Study of Politics' in 1970. The brainchild of the late James Dyson (then at Florida State University) and Frank Scioli (then at Drew University and now at the National Science Foundation), *ESP* was founded as a boutique journal dedicated exclusively to experimental work. The co-editors and members of their editorial board were committed behavioralists who were convinced that experiments could contribute to more rigorous hypothesis testing and thereby to theory building in political science. As stated by the editors, the mission of the journal was to 'provide an outlet for the publication of materials dealing with experimental research in the shortest possible time, and thus to aid in rapid dissemination of new ideas and developments in political research and theory.' *ESP* served as an important, albeit specialized outlet for political scientists interested in testing propositions about voting behavior, presidential popularity, mass communication and campaigns, or group decision making. The mere existence of a journal dedicated to experimental research (with a masthead featuring established scholars from highly ranked departments) provided a credible signal to graduate students and junior faculty that it might just be possible to publish (rather than perish) and build a career in political science on the basis of experimental research. Although *ESP* provided an important 'foot in the door', the marginalized status of experiments in political science persisted during the 1970s. Observational methods, most notably, survey research, dominated experimentation even among the practitioners of political psychology. When SUNY–Stony Brook was established in the early 1960s, the political science department was given a mandate to specialize in behavioral research and experimental methods. In the early 1980s, experimental methods were of growing interest to researchers in several subfields of the discipline. By the end of the 1980s, laboratory experimentation had become sufficiently recognized as a legitimate methodology in political science for mainstream journals to regularly publish papers based on experiments.

David Easton was the first to differentiate behavioralism from behaviorism in the 1950s. In the early 1940s, behaviorism itself was referred to as a behavioral science and later referred to as behaviorism. However, Easton sought to differentiate between the two disciplines.

Behavioralism (or behaviouralism) is an approach in political science which seeks to provide an objective, quantified approach to explaining and predicting political behavior. It is associated with the rise of the behavioral sciences, modelled after the natural sciences. Behavioralism seeks to examine the behavior, actions, and acts of individuals rather than the characteristics of institutions such as legislatives, executives, and judiciaries and groups in different social settings and explain this behavior as it relates to the political system.

Prior to the 'Behavioralist revolution', political science being a science at all was disputed. Critics saw the study of politics as being primarily qualitative and normative,

NOTES

and claimed that it lacked a scientific method necessary to be deemed a science. Behavioralists would use strict methodology and empirical research to validate their study as a social science. The behavioralist approach was innovative because it changed the attitude of the purpose of inquiry, moving toward research supported by verifiable facts. During its rise in popularity in the 1960s and 70s, behavioralism challenged the realist and liberal approaches, which the behavioralists called 'traditionalism', and other studies of political behavior that was not based on fact. To understand political behavior, behavioralism uses the following methods: sampling, interviewing, scoring and scaling and statistical analysis.

According to David Easton, behavioralism sought to be 'analytic not substantive, general rather than particular, and explanatory rather than ethical'. In this, the theory seeks to evaluate political behavior without 'introducing any ethical evaluations'; Rodger Beehler cites this as 'their insistence on distinguishing between facts and values'.

Behaviouralism is the belief that social theory should be constructed only on the basis of observable behaviour. The behavioural approach to political analysis developed out of positivism, adopting its assertion that scientific knowledge can be developed only on the basis of explanatory theories that are verifiable and falsifiable. Behavioural analysis typically involves the collection of quantifiable data through research surveys, statistical analysis and the construction of empirical theory that have predictive capacity. Behaviouralism is an approach to the analysis and explanation of political phenomena. It is particularly associated with the works of American political scientists after the Second World War (1939–45). True understanding of the irrationality of the man and of the power of government action for good or evil emerged as the proper goals of the research work of political scientists. Casting about for a new intellectual paradigm to guide their discipline in the modern age, political scientists fastened upon science as the key to planning, and the science of psychology as the key both to research methodology and to the nature of human behaviour. As behaviouralists turned to social psychology or sociology, they increasingly rejected history. The new orientation of political theory was wholly empirical and experimental. As elsewhere stated David Easton, an American political scientist, in his book *Political System an Enquiry into the State of Political Science* (1953) appealed for building up a behavioural political science. It has to be closer to other social sciences and would take part in the decision making process. However, the origins of the behaviouralist approach can be stressed back to the works of Graham Wallas and Arthur Bentley who wrote two famous books *Human Nature in Politics* and *The Process of Government* respectively which was published as early as 1908. In their works they led great emphasis on the informal process of politics and less on political institutions alone. Graham Wallas in his book *Human Nature in Politics* tried to introduce a new realism in political studies in the light of the new findings of contemporary psychology. He was influenced by the new psychology teachings which revealed that man was not a rational creature following his self interest and his political actions were not totally guided by self-interest as stated by classical economists and laissez–faire theorists. It is very difficult to explain the human nature in utilitarian perspective. Graham Wallas to overcome this problem insisted on exploring facts and evidence for understanding human nature and its manifestations in human behaviour. The gist of his argument was the political process could be understood only by analyzing as to how people actually behaved in a political situation and not merely by speculating on how they should or would behave. On the other hand, Arthur Bentley who is pioneer of 'group approach' to politics says only the description of political activity is not enough. He sought to provide for new tools of investigation. He led emphasis on the study of informal groups. He

NOTES

almost completely ignores the formal political institution. Unlike Graham Wallas who is influenced by psychology, Arthur Bentley was inspired by sociology. In his study the roles of pressure groups, political parties, elections and public opinion in the political process are highlighted.

Another prominent advocate of behaviouralist approach was Charles E. Merriam (1874–1953). The famous Chicago School was founded by him. He was the president of American Political Science Association in 1925 when he exhorted political scientists to look at political behaviour as one of the essential objects of enquiry in his presidential address. Thus, Merriam was an exponent of scientific method for the study of politics. At the same time, he was a champion of democracy. He called for employing the science into the service of democratic principle. Thus, he believed that democracy and science can be promoted together and hence complementary to each other. The school has done pioneer works in the development of the behavioural approach. Merriam was a vehement critic of contemporary political science. In his book *New Aspects of Politics* (1925) and in his article 'The Present State of the Study of Politics' which was published in American Political Science Review argued that contemporary political science lack scientific rigour. He criticized the work of historians for ignoring the role of psychological, sociological, economic factors in human affairs. He advised that the student of politics should take the help of recent advances in social sciences in the study of politics. He argued this will help to build an interdisciplinary and scientific character of political science. He called for the use of scientific approach in the study of politics. He sought to develop a 'Policy Science' by using quantitative techniques already developed in the fields of sociology and psychology. In this way Charles Merriam contributed at length to the evolution of behavioural approach.

Another exponent of scientific method William B. Munro however pointed out that it was not a proper function of political scientists to teach democratic citizenship. The case for a 'value-free' pure science was advanced by G.E.G. Catlin in his famous work *Science and Method of Politics* (1927). He articulated that power is the essence of politics. Harold D. Lasswell also supported this view in his pioneering work *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How.* In this book Lasswell emphasized on empirical approach to politics as the study and analysis of power.

All the above developments in the growth of behaviouralism were early attempts. Behaviouralism in political science was systematically developed only after the Second World War. The Behaviouralism had its philosophical origins in the writings of Auguste Comte in the nineteenth century and in the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle in the 1920's. However, behaviouralism did not accept all the philosophical arguments of the positivists. The contribution of American political scientists in this regard was quite significant. Some of the works of these American political scientists is worth mentioning here, such as 'The Impact on Political Science of the Revolution in the Behavioural Sciences' (1955), 'The Behavioural Approach in Political Science: Epitaph For a Monument to a Successful Protest' by Robert Dahl which was published in the American Political Science Review in 1961, 'The Impact of the Behavioural Approach on Traditional Political Science' (1962) by Evron M. Krikpatrick, 'The Correct Meaning of 'Behaviouralism' in Political Science'(1967) by David Easton and Heinz Eulau's article on 'Political Behaviour' in the International Encyclopedia of the Social Science which was published in 1968. It can be said that behaviouralism stood for a shift of focus in the study of politics from the formalism and normative orientations of the legalistic and philosophy schools to political behaviour, that is, the behaviour of articulators in the political field, such as, power-holder, power-seekers as well as voters. Thus behaviouralism

NOTES

is understood as more then the merely study of political behaviour though it was its main focus. The growing importance of behaviouralism sought to account for the psychological and social influences on behaviour of the individual in a political situation. It called for the study of such processes and factors as political–socializations, ideologies, culture, participation, communication, leadership, decision making, political violence etc. These processes involve interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research. Behaviouralism as a movement in political science did not remain confining to the study of individual–based political behaviour but developed into a set of orientations, procedures and methods of analysis. In practice it embraced all that lends a scientific character to the modern political science. A behaviourist like a positivist ascertains the correctness of an explanatory theory. It is the stress on empirical observation and testing that characterise the behavioural approach. A behaviouralist systematically compiles all the relevant facts, quantitative and qualitative, for an evaluation of a theoretical statement. Furthermore, behavioural analysis asserts that all scientific theories and/or explanation must in principle be capable of being falsified.

David Easton outlined eight major tenants of behaviouralism.

(a) *regularities* or uniformity in behaviour which can be expressed in generalizations or theory.

(b) *verification* or the testing of the validity of such generalizations or theories.
techniques for seeking and interpreting data.

(c) *quantification* and measurement in the recording of data.
values as distinguished between propositions, relating to ethical evaluation and those relating to empirical.

(d) *systematization* of research.
pure science or the seeking of understanding and explanation of behaviour, before utilization of the knowledge for solution of societal problems.

(e) *integration* of political research with that of other social sciences.

Behaviouralism came to accord primacy to higher degree of reliability vis-à-vis higher degree of generality. It, therefore, focus on question that could be answered on the basis of the methods available. In a nutshell, behaviouralism focused on the micro-level situations rather then attempting macro-level generalizations as a whole.

The approach has come under fire from both conservatives and radicals for the purported value-neutrality. Conservatives see the distinction between values and facts as a way of undermining the possibility of political philosophy. Neal Riemer believes behavioralism dismisses 'the task of ethical recommendation' because behavioralists believe 'truth or falsity of values (democracy, equality, and freedom, etc.) cannot be established scientifically and are beyond the scope of legitimate inquiry'. Christian Bay believed behavioralism was a pseudo political science and that it did not represent 'genuine' political research. Bay objected to empirical consideration taking precedence over normative and moral examination of politics. Behavioralism initially represented a movement away from 'naive empiricism', but has been criticized as an approach has been criticized for 'naive scientism'. Additionally, radical critics believe that the separation of fact from value makes the empirical study of politics impossible.

Behaviouralism, like positivism has been criticized for its mindless empiricism. Both Hempel and Popper reject the 'narrow inductivist view' of scientific enquiry, whereby they argued that a proper enquiry was possible only if relevant facts were supported by clear minimum theoretical expectation. Behaviouralism proclaimed to offer a 'value

free' and 'scientific' theory steering clear of ethical and political bias. They overemphasises on the fact that a theory is considered good if it was consistent with observation. David Easton himself has enumerated the shortcomings of behaviouralism which are mentioned below:

(a) Behaviouralism pursued fundamental rather than applied knowledge. Hence it distances itself from immediate political reality. It also neglects the special responsibilities of an intellectual.

(b) It tends towards a subject less, non-humane discipline, one in which human intentions and purposes played little creative part.

(c) It is wrongly assumed that behavioural political science alone was free of ideological presuppositions.

(d) It accepts a pristine, positivist interpretation of the nature of science uncritically.

(e) It remains indifferent to the resulting fragmentation of knowledge.

(f) It is not able to deal with value concerns and to describe the nature of the good society.

1.5.2 Post-behaviouralism

Behaviouralism rose to prominent during mid nineteen sixties as a dominant approach in the methodology of political science. However, it was not free from criticism. One of its prominent critics Leo Strauss in his article 'What is Political Philosophy?' published in *Journal of Politics* (1957) argued that the rise of behaviouralism was symptomatic of a crisis in political theory because of its failure to come to grips with normative issues. Another political scientist Sheldon Wolin in the article 'Political Theory as a Vocation' which was published in *American Political Science review* (1969) pointed out that preoccupation of political science with method signified and abdication of true vocation of political theory. Another prominent thinker Thomas Kuhn in his celebrated work *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1962) outlined that significance of scientific methods lies in its capacity of problem-solving and crisis-management and not in methodological sophistication. Gradually after 1960s, even the exponents of behaviouralism realised the draw backs of behaviouralism. They realized that behaviouralism's strict adherence to 'pure science' was responsible for its failure to attempt to the pressing social and political issues of the period. The famous behaviouralist David Easton, in 1969, in his presidential address to the American Political Science Association announced a new revolution in political science-a post-behavioural revolution that represented a shift of focus from strict methodological issues to a greater concern with public responsibilities of the discipline and with political problems. Thus, post–behaviouralism is concerned with the reality of human life. The post-behaviouralism gave two slogans: relevance and action. However it didn't completely depart from behaviouralism rather it stood for consolidating its gain and applying them from problem-solving crisis management. David Easton, emphatically drew the attention of contemporary political scientists to the impending threat of the nuclear bomb, inner conflicts within the US which might lead to civil war or dictatorship and undeclared war in Vietnam which was perturbing moral consciousness of world over. David Easton lamented the over-reliance of behaviouralists on methodology. He says that intellectuals have a great role to play in protecting the human value of civilization. He emphasized that behaviouralists should not ignored this role. He reminded them of their responsibility to reshape society. He argued that scientists could adopt a rational interest in value construction and application without denying the validity of their science.

NOTES

It placed less emphasis on the scientific method and empirical theory, and laid more stress on the public responsibilities of the discipline. In a nutshell, post-behaviouralism seeks to reintroduce a concern for values in the behavioural approach itself.

Post-behavioralism also known as neo-behavioralism was a reaction against the dominance of behavioralist methods in the study of politics. One of the key figures in post-behaviouralist thinking was David Easton who was originally one of the leading advocates of the 'behavioural revolution'. Post-behaviouralists claimed that despite the alleged value-neutrality of behaviouralist research it was biased towards the status quo and social preservation rather than social change.

Post-behaviouralism challenged the idea that academic research had to be value neutral and argued that values should not be neglected. Post-behaviouralism claimed that behaviouralisms bias towards observable and measurable phenomena meant that too much emphasis was being placed on easily studied trivial issues at the expensive of more important topics. Research should be more relevant to society and intellectuals have a positive role to play in society.

The cardinal features of the Post-Behaviouralism can be enumerated as following:

(i) Substance preceded technique, which meant the pressing problems of society became tools of investigation.

(ii) Behaviouralism itself was seen as ideologically conservative and limited to abstraction rather than to the reality at the times in crisis.

(iii) Science could be evaluatively neutral, for facts were inseparable from values, and value premises had to be related to knowledge.

(iv) Intellectuals had to shoulder the responsibilities of their society, defend human values of civilization, and not become mere technicians insular to social problems.

(v) The intellectual had to put knowledge to work and engage in reshaping society.

(vi) The intellectual must actively participate in the politicization of the professions and academic institutions.

For the post-behaviouralists, a theory, in order to be treated as an explanatory theory, in the first place has to be evaluated i.e. tested empirically. Easton also pointed out that dissatisfaction with behaviouralism led to revisions in the method and content, favouring a revival of interpretive understanding and historical analysis, and a complete rejection of systematic methodology, at the same time emphasizing the need to introduce formal modelling and rational actor deductivism. Moreover, new concerns such as feminism, environmentalism, ethnicity, racial identity and equality and nuclear war have emerged. There is a general loss of central focus regarding the subject matter and consensus about methodologies. He announced the beginning of neo-behaviouralism in order to bring about a new unity in the theoretical focus of the discipline.

Heinz Eulau describes post-behaviouralism as a 'near hysterical response to political frustrations engendered by the disconcerting and shocking events of the late sixties and early seventies.

In the contemporary social science the behavioural approach has shown increasing concern with solving the prevailing problem of society. In this way it has largely absorbed the 'post-behavioural' orientation within its scope.

Check Your Progress

7. Name two contemporary approaches to the study of politics.
8. What do you mean by behaviouralism?

NOTES

1.6 DECLINE AND REVIVAL OF POLITICAL THEORY

During the middle of the twentieth century many observers talked about the decline of the political theory. Some of the observers even discussed about its death. Some of the observers declared political theory as the dog house. These discourses emerged because of the pessimistic and cynical view that the classical tradition in political theory was filled with value judgments and devoid of empiricism. The logical positivism which emerged during 1930s, criticized the normative theory for its value judgment. Later on, the behaviouralist attacked the classical tradition of which David Easton was most prominent. According to David Easton, political theory is concerned with some kind of historical form. He argued that political theory had lost its constructive roles. He outlined that political theory as practiced by William Dunning, Charle H. Mcwain and George Holland Sabine had decline into historicism.

There are two schools of thought about the development of political theory in the contemporary period. One school argues that there is decline of political theory and another school argues against it. In mid twentieth century the exponents of new political science began to question the continued relevance of the traditional political theory. David Easton and American Political scientist in his *Political System: An Enquiry into the State of Political Science* (1953) asserted that the traditional political theory was based on mere speculation. It was devoid of acute observation of the political reality in order to lay scientific foundations of the study of politics, it was necessary to rescue it from the study of classics and the history of political ideas. He argued that the traditional political theory was the product of the turmoil that characterize the past ages. According to him it particularly flourished in Greece in pre-Plato days, Italy in the fifteenth century, England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and France in the eighteenth century which where the days of wide spread social and political upheaval. It had no relevance in contemporary society. He also pointed out that there has been no outstanding political philosopher after Marx (1818–83) and J.S. Mill (1806–73). Easton argued that while economist and sociologist had produced a systematic study of human behaviour in there respective spheres of investigation, political scientists had lagged behind. They failed to acquire suitable research to account for the rise of fascism or communism and their continuance. Again, during the Second World War (1939–45), economists, sociologists and psychologists had played an active role in the decision-making process but political scientists were ignored. He, therefore, appealed for building of a behavioural political science, closer to other social science, to take its due place in the decision-making process. He argued that the contemporary society would evolve its own value system from its own experience and insight. Political scientists would only focus on building causal theory to explain political behaviour. However, Easton changed his view after one and a half decade. In his presidential address to the American Political Science Association in 1969, he lunched his 'post-behavioural' revolution. In fact, Easton was trying to convert political science from a pure science to 'applied science'. He insisted that scientific investigation should enable the contemporary societies to tide over the prevailing crisis. This also involved a renewed concern with values which were sought to be excluded in the earlier behavioural approach.

The debate on the decline of political theory which appeared in 1950s was also joined by some other prominent writers. Thus, Alfred Cobban in his paper on 'The Decline of Political Theory' published in *Political Science Quarterly* (1953) argued that political theory had lost its significance in capitalist as well as communist systems.

NOTES

Capitalist systems were inspired by the idea of 'libertarian democracy' where as there was no political theorist of democracy. It was also characterized by an overwhelming role of bureaucracy and the creation of a huge military machine. Political theory had practically no role to play in sustaining this system. While, communist systems were characterized by a new form of political organization and the rule of a small oligarchy. Political theory had taken a back seat under these systems. However, Cobban came to the conclusion that all was yet not lost. Political science has to answer questions which the methodology of social science may not be able to answer. It must evolve criteria of judgment which will revive the relevance of political science.

Then Seymour Martin Lipset in his *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (1960) argued that the values of the contemporary society had already been decided. In the United States, the age-old search for 'good society' had come to an end because they had already achieved it. The prevailing form of democracy in that country was 'the closest approximation to the good society itself in operation'. Thus, Lipset too, questioned the continued relevance of political theory in those days. Another political scientist, Leo Strauss, in his famous paper 'What is Political Philosophy?' published in *Journal of Politics* (1957) and in *An Epilogue to Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics* argued that the new science of politics was in fact a symptom of the alleged decline of political theory by adopting positivist approach it had ignored the challenge of normative issues.

Another political scientist, Dante Jermino, in his *Beyond Ideology the Revival of Political Theory* (1967) argued that in most of the 19th century and early 20th century there were two major causes of the decline of political theory: (i) rise of positivism which led to the craze for science; and (ii) the prevalence of political ideologies culminating in Marxism. But now it was again in ascendancy, particularly in the political thought of Michel Oakeshott, Hannah Arendt, Bertrand de Jouvenal, Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin. This list was expanded by Jermino in a subsequent paper so as to include John Rawls, C.B. Macpherson, Christian Bay, Robert Nozick, Herbert Marcus, Jurgen Habermas, Alasdaire MacIntyre and Michel Walzer. The works of these writers had revived the grand tradition of political philosophy. Jermino suggested that in order to understand the new role of political theory, it was imperative to identify it with political philosophy. Political philosophy is a critical study of the principles of the right order in human social existence, involving enquiry into right and wrong. Jermino argued that political philosophy deals with perennial problems confronting man in his social existence. He pointed out that detachment is not ethical neutrality. A political philosopher cannot remain indifferent to the political struggle of his times as a behavouralist would claim. In short, behavioural political science concentrates on facts and remains neutral to values. Political philosophy cannot grow along with positivism which abstained from a critical examination of any social situation. The gulf between traditionalist and behaviouralist components of political theory is so wide that they cannot be reunited. Any theory separated from the perennial concerns of political philosophy will prove to be irrelevant. Jermino laments that the behavioural political theory has often implicitly or uncritically endorsed the policies and practices of the established order instead of performing the Socratic the function of 'speaking truth to power'. He wants that full recovery of critical political theory cannot be achieved within the positivist universe of discourse. Herbert Marcuse has significantly pointed to the risk involved in the demand for scientific study for society and politics.

However, since 1970s, the dispute between political science and political philosophy has largely subsided. While David Easton had shown a renewed concern with values in his post-behavioural approach, the exponents of political philosophy, did not hesitate in

NOTES

testing there assumptions by empirical method. Karl Popper (1902–94), an eminent exponent of scientific method, proceeded to draw conclusion regarding social values. John Rawls (1921–2002) adopted empirical method for arriving at his principles of justice. Then C.B. Macpherson (1911–87) attacked the empirical theory of democracy propounded by Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) and Robert Dahl advanced his own radical theory of democracy. Herbert Marcus and Jurgen Habermass have shown a strong empirical insight in their critical analysis of the contemporary capitalism. It is now held that political science like other social and natural sciences enables us to strengthen our means but we will have to resort to political philosophy to determine our ends. As means and ends are interdependent, political science and political philosophy play complementary role in our social life.

The American Political Scientist David Easton tried to examine the reasons for the decline of political theory into historicism. He argued that first and foremost tendency among political scientists is to confirm to the moral propositions of their age, leading to a loss of the constructive approach. The emphasis is to uncover and reveal once values which imply that there is no longer the need to enquire into the merit of these moral values but merely understand their 'origins, development and social impact'.

Revival

Political theory is considered as a study of the history of ideas during the third decade of the twentieth century, particularly with the purpose to define the totalitarian communism and defend the liberal democracy. Charles Marriam, one of the famous behaviouralist and Lasswell Kaplan tried to establish a scientific political theory. They developed it with the eventual purpose of controlling human behaviour. Their method of enquiry was description rather then prescription. On the other hand, in the traditional sense, political theory was revived in the works of some famous political scientists like Arendt Theodore Adorno (1903–1969), Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), Leo Strauss (1899–1973), Oakeshott, Bertrand de Jouvenal and Eric Vogelin (1901–1985). These political scientists were in opposition of the commitment to liberal democracy, faith in science, and a faith in historical progress. They were also against political messianism and utopianism in politics. Hanna Ardent criticized behaviouralism and stressed on the uniqueness and responsibility of the individual human being. She argued in her book the *Human Condition* (1958) that search for uniformities in human nature by the behaviouralists would only contribute towards stereo typing the human being. She also rejected the idea of hidden and anonymous forces in history. She also pointed to the essential incompatibility between ideology and political theory. She illustrated the difference between responsible action and efficient automatic behaviour.

Like Hannah Arendt, Michel Oakeshott also contributed to the revival of political theory through his writings. He emphasized on the philosophical analysis of experience. He understood experience to be a concrete whole on different kinds of 'modes'. According to him the modes constituted 'arrests' in experience. In his book *Experience and its Modes* (1933) he outlined four principle modes of experience such as history, science, practice and poetry. He pointed out that science concerned itself with measurement and quantification, history with the past, practice with an act of desiring and obtaining, and poetry with imagination and contemplation. He did not distinguish between subject and object, fact and value. He rejected the contention that philosophy could learn from method of science. He also ruled out political ideology and empiricism in an understanding of politics. Like Ardent, Oakeshott described politics 'As an activity of attending to the general arrangements of a collection of a, who in respect of their

common recognition of a manner of attending to its arrangements, compose a single community'.

Similarly, Juvenal opposed the modern trend of converting politics into administration depriving it for the potentiality for creativity in the public sphere. He opposed ideological sloganeering and utopianism. He outlines that politics essentially involves moral choice with the purpose of building and consolidating individuals. Leo Strauss reaffirmed the importance of classical political theory to provide remedy to the crisis of modern times. He said that a political philosopher is primarily interested in truth. Leo Strauss scrutinized the methods and purposes of the 'new' political science and concluded that it was defective when compared with classical political theory particularly that of Aristotle. Strauss countered David Easton's charge of historicism by alleging that it was the new science that was responsible for the decline in political theory, for it pointed it to an abetted the general political crisis of the West because of its overall neglect of normative issues. He equated behaviouralism's value-free approach with 'dogmatic atheism' and 'permissive egalitarianism'. He argued that it was based on dogmatic atheism, for it spotted an attitude of 'unreasoned unbelief' where as it was rooted in permissive egalitarianism because the distinction between haves and values means to into its proponents that man can live without ideology. Eric Vogelin pointed out the inseparableness of political science and political theory. He argued that without the latter the former was not possible. According to him political theory was not ideology, utopian or scientific methodology rather it is an experimental science of the right order for both the individual and society. He said that it dissected critically and empirically the problem of order.

The Frankfurt school also contributed towards the revival of political theory. The school represented by the political thinkers like Theodore Adorno and Herbert Marcuse emerged in Germany in the 1920s. It was directly associated with 'an anti-Bolshevik radicalism and open-ended or critical Marxism'. The school of thought was critical of both capitalism as well as socialism practiced in Soviet Union. The member of this school produced a large number of scholarly works in humanistic science, philosophy, empirical sociology, psycho analysis, theory of literature, law and political theory. The school of thought is also known as critical theory. It comprised of various approaches. They were critical of all form of domination and exploitation. They were also critical of positivism and any possibility of a value-free social science. In their analysis they also rejected the over emphasis on materialism by Marxists. One of the famous political theorists of the school was Jurgen Habermass who in his work 'Theory of Legitimisation Crisis', critically examine the advanced capitalism and communicative action. He was also a critic of post modernism. He expressed his faith in the power of reason and progress. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that political theory is still relevant and alive as a result of some of the great modern political thinkers in last few decades.

1.7 SUMMARY

- Political theory is an interdisciplinary endeavour whose centre of gravity lies at the humanities end of the happily still undisciplined discipline of the political science.
- The growth and evolution of political theory can be elaborated in three major streams. These are:
  - o classical political theory
  - o modern political theory
  - o contemporary political theory

NOTES

Check Your Progress

9. What is political philosophy?
10. How was political theory regarded during the third decade of the twentieth century?

- Political science is the study of political intuitions, constitutions and policy processes.
- Political science aims at an accurate description and explanation of these features of politics.
- Behaviouralism and post-behaviouralism are the two contemporary approaches to the study of politics.
- Logical positivism which emerged during 1930s, criticized the normative theory for its value judgment.

1.8 KEY TERMS

- **Political theory:** A personal endeavour to understand and experience as the present political reality and also to evolve a mechanism in order to transcend the present imperfect society leading to perfection and a more just order
- **Political science:** The study of political intuitions, constitutions and policy processes
- **Positivism:** A set of epistemological perspectives and philosophies of science which hold that the scientific method is the best approach to uncover the processes by which both physical and human events occur
- **Behaviouralism:** An approach in political science which seeks to provide an objective, quantified approach to explaining and predicting political behavior

1.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Political theory is an interdisciplinary endeavour whose centre of gravity lies at the humanities end of the happily still undisciplined discipline of the political science.
2. Political ideology is also somewhat different from political theory. It is a systematic and all-embracing doctrine which attempts to give a complete and universally applicable theory of human nature and society, with a detail programme of attaining it.
3. The growth and evolution of political theory can be elaborated in three major streams. These are:
   (i) Classical political theory
   (ii) Modern political theory
   (iii) Contemporary political theory
4. Sheldon Wolin identifies some principal characteristics of classical tradition which can be mentioned as below:
   (i) It sought to identify the politics with the public.
   (ii) It aimed at acquiring reliable knowledge about matters concerning the people.
   (iii) It laid emphasis on order, balance, equilibrium, harmony and stability.
   (iv) It tried to project an ideal form of government
   (v) It laid stress on comparative studies and deal with concepts like law, citizenship, justice and participation
   (vi) It was largely ethical in perspective.
5. Political science is the study of political intuitions, constitutions and policy processes.

6. Positivism refers to a set of epistemological perspectives and philosophies of science which hold that the scientific method is the best approach to uncover the processes by which both physical and human events occur.
7. Behaviouralism and post-behaviouralism are the contemporary approaches to the study of politics.
8. Behavioralism (or behaviouralism) is an approach in political science which seeks to provide an objective, quantified approach to explaining and predicting political behavior.
9. Political philosophy is a critical study of the principles of the right order in human social existence, involving enquiry into right and wrong.
10. Political theory is considered as a study of the history of ideas during the third decade of the twentieth century, particularly with the purpose to define the totalitarian communism and defend the liberal democracy.

1.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Distinguish between the term political theory, political ideology and political philosophy.
2. Differentiate between behavouralism and post-behaviouralism.
3. Do you think that political theory has been revived?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the meaning, nature and significance of political theory.
2. Enumerate Hacker's points on the classical tradition of political theory.
3. Discuss the views of Auguste Comte on positivism.

1.11 FURTHER READING

Sharma, Urmila and S.K. Sharma. 2000. *Principles and Theory of Political Science*. Atlantic Publishers.

Leopold, David and Marc Stears. 2008. *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*. Oxford University Press.

Elster, Jon. 1993. *Political Psychology*. Cambridge University Press.

Agarwal, R. C. 1991. *Political Theory: Principles of Political Science*. S. Chand Publishers.

Hoffman, John. 2007. *A Glossary of Political Theory*. Stanford University Press.

UNIT 2 IMPACT OF POSITIVISM ON POLITICAL SCIENCE

NOTES

Structure

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will be acquainted with the use of rational actor models and rational choice theory. We will get familiar with the concept of the public choice approach and its different interpretations.

The unit also discusses the conceptual aspects of general system theory and the input-output model, as outlined by David Easton. It also gives an overview on structural functionalism as developed and defined by Almond and Powell. Further, we will also learn about the communication model devised by Karl Deutsch.

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Interpret the meaning of rational choice theory and use of rational actor model
- Explain the concept of public choice approach and its contribution to political analysis
- Describe the general system theory and explain the input-out put analysis as advocated by David Easton
- Define structural functionalism as developed and defined by Almond and Powell
- Comprehend the communication model of Karl Deutsch

NOTES

2.2 USE OF RATIONAL ACTORS MODELS

The rational actor model is based on rational choice theory. The state is the primary unit of analysis of the rational actor model and inter-state relations (or international relations) are its context for analysis. The model envisages the state as a monolithic unitary actor, capable of making rational decisions based on preference ranking and value maximisation. Rational actor model advocate, that a rational decision making process is used by a state. This process includes: (i) Goal setting and ranking; (ii) Consideration of options; (iii) Assessment of consequences, (iv) Profit-maximization.

Before going into details of the rational actors models we must have a look into the rational choice theory.

Rational choice theory, also known as choice theory or rational action theory is a framework for understanding and often formally modeling social and economic behavior. It is the main theoretical paradigm in the currently dominant school of microeconomics. Rationality (wanting more rather than less of a good) is widely used as an assumption of the behavior of individuals in microeconomic models and analysis and appears in almost all economics textbook treatments of human decision-making. It is also central to some of modern political science and is used by some scholars in other disciplines such as sociology and philosophy. It is the same as instrumental rationality which involves seeking the most cost-effective means to achieve a specific goal without refl ecting on the worthiness of that goal. Gary Becker was an early proponent of applying rational actor models more widely. He won the 1992 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his studies of discrimination, crime, and human capital.

The 'rationality' described by rational choice theory is different from the colloquial and most philosophical uses of the word. For most people, 'rationality' means 'sane', 'in a thoughtful clear-headed manner', or knowing and doing what's healthy in the long term. Rational choice theory uses a specific and narrower definition of 'rationality' simply to mean that an individual acts as if balancing costs against benefits to arrive at action that maximizes personal advantage. For example, this may involve kissing someone, cheating on a test, using cocaine, or murdering someone. In rational choice theory, all decisions, crazy or sane, are postulated as mimicking such a 'rational' process.

Rational choice is primarily normative theory and assumes that all individuals can be rational. Around 1950, economists James Buchanan, began to focus on decision making in government institutions, and in articles and books Gordon Tullock (1962) carved out a niche around public or rational-choice theory. They argued that an analysis of the market should be based on rational individuals who pursue their own-interests. Further, they were concerned with how efficiently government institutions function to shape individual preferences about public goods and policies. Subsequent work stemmed largely from James Buchanan (1975), Anthony Downs (1957), Mancur Olsen (1965), William Riker (1962), and Gordon Tullock (1965) and was based on models of rational choice theory and methodological individualism in which benefits and costs are considered before taking action. In tracing the evolution of rational choice theory Almond alluded to the metaphor of the 'indivisible hand' in the thought of Adam Smith as a means of expressing the ideal of democratic politics and the competitive struggle for power and the metaphor of markets in descriptions of democratic politics in the thought of Pendleton Herring and Joseph Schumpeter. Rational choice political scientists in the 1960s and 1970s turned towards economics and formal model describe political behaviour. Almond warned that

NOTES

reducing politics to a market or game, however, may result in exaggerated claims: rational choice analysis may lead to empirical and normative distortions, unless it is used in combination with historical, sociological, anthropological, and psychological sciences, which deal with the values and utilities of people, cross-culturally, cross nationally, across the social strata, and over time. Almond illustrated this propositions through the work of Robert Bates on Africa and Third World political economy, who discovered that conventional economic provided a weak foundation for the study of agrarian questions; likewise, radical economy fails to provided analysis of a peasantry whose class action is problematic, and Almond recognised the need to combine the rational choice tradition with cultural study. He expressed despair that the rational choice school has neglected social science, literatures that display the varieties of values, preferences and goals in time and space in different historical periods, in different cultures and societies, and among different social groupings. This failure of rational choice theorist leaves them with theories that can not travel very far in space and time and cannot deal effectively with political change. Some rational choice theorists, most notably William Riker and Peter Ordeshook, reconcile a utilitarian account of human beings as cost-benefit calculators with the incongruous evidence of widespread voting by assuming that citizens obtain benefits from voting, which can be formally expressed in utiles or informally as a satisfaction gained in living up to the democratic ethic of voting. The satisfaction we gain from living up to out moral duty is then factored into the equation of costs and benefits that determines whether it is rational for us to vote to any given election.

There can be little doubt that Rational Choice Theory (RCT) with its emphasis on the 'instrumentally rational' individual as the foundation of the political process has significantly enhanced the scope of political science. RCT in political science raises the same questions that it does in economics. These essentially stem from the fact that for RCT, whether in economics or in political science, choice and preference are regarded as synonymous. It is worth pointing out that the RCT literature also travels under a variety of other names: inter alia public choice theory; social choice theory; game theory; rational actor models; positive political economy; the economic approach to politics. However, regardless of the nom-de-guerre adopted by RCT, it always builds on the assumption that people choose, within the limits of their knowledge, the best available means to achieve their goals. They are presumed to be 'instrumentally rational', meaning that they take actions not for their own sake, but only in so far as they secure desired ends.

More specifically, Green and Shapiro (1994) identify four salient features of RCT:

- RCT involves utility maximisation or under conditions of uncertainty, expected utility maximisation, which is to say that confronted with an array of options, the rational actor chooses the one which affords (or is likely to afford) him (her) the greatest welfare;
- RCT requires that certain consistency requirements must be satisfied: each individual must be capable of ranking options in terms of the welfare they offer him (or her) and preferences must be transitive;
- The relevant unit for the study of the political process is the individual: it is the individual and not groups of individuals which is the basic building block for the study of politics;
- RCT claims universality in the sense that it applies to all persons at all times.

NOTES

The rationale for RCT begins with the observation that in politics, as in economics, individuals compete for scarce resources and that, therefore, the same methods of analyses used by economists might also serve well in political science. As Tullock observed, 'voters and customers are essentially the same people. Mr. Smith buys and votes; he is the same man in the supermarket and in the voting booth'. Although the incursion of the analytical methods of economics into political science-which is the hall-mark of RCT-began in the 1950s, it was not until at least three decades later that the trickle became a flood.

Today, not only is RCT disproportionately represented in the pages of leading political science journals but it has also expanded beyond political theory into new fields like international relations and comparative politics.

This application of economic principles to non-market areas, be they in politics or elsewhere, may be viewed in a 'thin' sense, meaning an inclination on the part of individuals to satisfy their preferences; alternatively, it may be viewed in a 'thick' sense, meaning that whatever the ends people pursue -deciding on a party for which to vote, deciding on whether or not to start a family -they do so through instrumentally rational behaviour by choosing a course of action which is 'utility-maximising'. The point is that, as Friedman reminds us, the possibility that people's political behaviour may be underpinned by considerations of self-interest is often transformed into the assumption that their political behaviour is determined by self interest. For example, one of the founders of public choice theory argued that 'the burden of proof should rest with those who claim that wholly different models of behaviour apply in the political and economic realms of behaviour'.

Some Marxist scholars have also given their version of rational choice theory as an alternative to conservative rational choice theory. They are called as rational choice Marxist. Jon Elster and Adam Przeworski are prominent among them. Their work resembles neo-classical economics in its emphasis on equilibrium analysis and rational decision making. Marxist rational choice theory focuses on the utility of individual choice in attaining goals and on the principle that all people act rationally to achieve their preferences. Elster in his book *Making Sense of Mar*k (1985) tried to show that Marx himself was a founder of rational choice theory. Prezeworski placed more emphasis on structurally determined positions that infl uence individuals decision making parameters. For example, in *Capitalism and Social Democracy* his analysis of the failures of social democracy, he emphasised the lack of choice as an evolutionary, structural determined phenomena. According to Prezeworski choice exists but is structurally determined by limits outside the realm of individual choice. He also emphasised problems of unity but focused more on the empirical realities of contemporary life than on philosophical propositions.

In a nutshell, this form of Marxism suggests the possibility of a political culture in which individual choice is the norm. Social classes and class struggle are not determinant, the approach is appealing to academics not only because it fits well with analysis of advanced capitalist societies seeking reform alone social democratic lines but also because it approximates positivist theory and the emphasis of man stream social science on quantitative analysis, statistical application, and mathematical formal models.

The rational actor model is linchpin of foreign policy decision-making process. Paul MacDonald contends that many see it as the most plausible candidate for a universal theory of political and social behaviour whose simple and intuitively plausible assumptions

NOTES

hold the promise of unifying the diverse subfields of political science. A rational approach exclusively used in foreign policy analysis today, expected utility theory sprang from the work of Von Neumann and Morgenstern in the 1940s. The approach has its roots in micro economics. The decision maker is assumed to be able to rank preferences according to the degree of satisfaction achieving these goals and objectives. The rational actor is also expected to be able to identify alternatives and their consequences and to select from these alternatives in an effort to maximize satisfaction. In this setting, the rational economic decision maker is expected to be able to access a set of objectives and goals.

Allison Graham defines rationality as a 'consistent, value-maximizing choice within specified constraints'. According to Allison, the rational decision maker chooses the alternative that provides the consequence that is most preferred. The brevity of this definition belies the strength of the model. The rational actor model is parsimonious. This means that a few rather straightforward assumptions, taken together, can explain a wide range of foreign policy decisions and actions. The model is primarily useful in explanations of economic behaviour. Macdonald summarizes the three parts of the rationality assumption. (i) actors are assumed to employ 'purposive action' motivated by goaloriented behaviour and not simply by habit or social expectations. The decision maker must be able to identify and a priori goal and more with the intention of reaching that objective. An unemployed person looking for a job is behaving purposively if he or she actively searches for work. (ii) actors display 'consistent preferences' as manifested in the ability to rank the preferences in transitive order. Transitivity means that if outcome 1 is preferred over outcome 2, and 2 is preferred to 3, then 1 is preferred to 3, for example, if diplomacy is preferred to sanctions and sanctions are preferred to use of force, then diplomacy is preferred over the use of force.

Invariance means that a decision maker's preference holds steady in the face of various means of information presentation. William Riker observes that preference ordering is a hallmark of purposive behaviour so that taken together these first two assumptions mean that actors must know what they want and be able to rank outcomes in relation to the goal. In other word, you need to know your destination if you have to get there. (iii) as noted by Allison 'utility maximisation' means that actors will select the alternative that provides the greatest amount of net benefits.

Greg Cashman provides a useful set of steps in the rational model:

- Identify problem;
- Identify and rank goals;
- Gather information (this can be ongoing);
- Identify alternatives for reaching goals;
- Analyse alternatives by considering consequence s and effectiveness (costs and befits) of each alternative and probabilities associated with success;
- Select alternative that maximizes chances of selecting best alternative as determined in step five;
- Implement decision;
- Monitor and evaluate.

A careful consideration of policy alternatives using the ration actor model does not automatically ensure a sound outcome. Experts and advisory groups often analyze policy dilemmas thoroughly but arrive at a suboptimal outcome. In general, the analytic

NOTES

process of the rational model should lead to better decision, although not always to better outcomes.

Scholars distinguish between 'thin' and 'thick' rationality. Thin rationality simply denotes the strategic pursuit of stable and ordered preferences. Such preferences can be of any kind: selfish, self-destructive, or other. Thick rationality assumes, in contrast, that actors have specific preferences, in practice mostly material self-interest of the preservation or augmentation of power; for politicians typically perpetuation in office. Consequently, thin rationality can be applied in the study of much wider range of human behviour and decision and thick rationality can.

Criticisms:

The rational choice model of both traditional and structural Marxism has been criticised. Critics call both the approach as dogmatic and unacceptable. They heavily criticised the Marxist conception of exploitation and class. They alleged that structural Marxist seek to reorient Marxist epistemology, abandon the old assumptions and premises and convert Marxism to the realm of subjective social analysis. In their 1994 work, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, Green and Shapiro argue that the empirical outputs of rational choice theory have been limited. They contend that much of the applicable literature, at least in political science, was done with weak statistical methods and that when corrected many of the empirical outcomes no longer hold. When taken in this perspective, RCT has provided very little to the overall understanding of political interaction and is an amount certainly disproportionately weak relative to its appearance in the literature. Yet, they concede that cutting edge research, by scholars well-versed in the general scholarship of their fields (such as work on the U.S. Congress by Keith Krehbiel, Gary Cox, and Mat McCubbins) has generated valuable scientific progress. Schram and Caterino (2006) contains a fundamental methodological criticism of rational choice theory for promoting the view that the natural science model is the only appropriate methodology in social science and that political science should follow this model with its emphasis on quantification and mathematization. Schram and Caterino argue instead for methodological pluralism. The same argument is made by William E. Connolly, who in his work *Neuropolitics* shows that advances in neuroscience further illuminate some of the problematic practices of rational choice theory.

The rational actor model has been subject to criticism. The model tends to neglect a range of political variables of which Michael Clarke includes 'political decisions, non-political decisions, bureaucratic procedures, continuations of previous policy, and sheer accident'. Although the rational actor model is parsimonious and elegant, its assumptions are often construed as unrealistic. Nevertheless, the model has pioneered a new interest in the study of politics, economics, psychology and several other fields. It is attractive because of its parsimony and predictive power. That is, it relies on only a few relatively straightforward assumptions to explain and predict a wide variety of decisions. Among other models, the rational model is the basis of game theory and expected utility theory. For all of its merits, the model continues to attract criticisms.

Both the assumptions and the behavioral predictions of rational choice theory have sparked criticism from various camps. As mentioned above, some economists have developed models of bounded rationality, which hope to be more psychologically plausible without completely abandoning the idea that reason underlies decision- making processes. Other economists have developed more theories of human decision- making that allow for the roles of uncertainty, institutions, and determination of individual tastes by their socioeconomic environment. In their 1994 work, *Pathologies of Rational*

NOTES

Choice Theory, Green and Shapiro argue that the empirical outputs of rational choice theory have been limited. They contend that much of the applicable literature, at least in political science, was done with weak statistical methods and that when corrected many of the empirical outcomes no longer hold. When taken in this perspective, Rational Choice Theory has provided very little to the overall understanding of political interaction and is an amount certainly disproportionately weak relative to its appearance in the literature. Yet, they concede that cutting edge research, by scholars well-versed in the general scholarship of their fields (such as work on the U.S. Congress by Keith Krehbiel, Gary Cox, and Mat McCubbins) has generated valuable scientific progress.

In presenting their critique, Green and Shapiro were quick to concede the many achievements that have emanated from the application of RCT to political science. But, in terms of its consonance with reality RCT contains a number of pathologies. These have been succinctly summarised by Friedamn and his summary is reproduced here:

- RCT scholars engage in 'post hoc theory development': first they look at the facts and devise a theory to fit them fail to formulate empirically testable hypotheses.
- If data contrary to the theory later appears, the theory is modified to fit the new facts.
- RCT theories often rely on unobservable entities which make them empirically untestable.
- RCT theorists engage in arbitrary 'domain restriction': the theory is applicable whenever it seems to work and not otherwise
- RCT theories are vague about the magnitude of the effects being predicted.
- RCT theories often search for confirming, rather than falsifying, evidence.

Schram and Caterino (2006) contains a fundamental methodological criticism of rational choice theory for promoting the view that the natural science model is the only appropriate methodology in social science and that political science should follow this model, with its emphasis on quantification and mathematization. Schram and Caterino argue instead for methodological pluralism. The same argument is made by William E. Connolly, who in his work *Neuropolitics* shows that advances in neuroscience further illuminate some of the problematic practices of rational choice theory.

Describing the decisions made by individuals as rational and utility maximizing may seem to be a tautological explanation of their behavior that provides very little new information. While there may be many reasons for a rational choice theory approach, two are important for the social sciences. First, assuming humans make decisions in a rational, rather than a stochastic manner implies that their behavior can be modelled and thus predictions can be made about future actions. Second, the mathematical formality of rational choice theory models allows social scientists to derive results from their models that may have otherwise not been seen, and submit these theoretical results for empirical verification. Despite these benefits, there is nothing about rational choice theory that tells scholars that they should reject other methods of investigating questions about the economy and society, such as the sociological determination of individual tastes.

There can be little doubt that RCT with its emphasis on the 'instrumentally rational' individual as the foundation of the political process has significantly enhanced the scope of political science. To list some of its achievements:

NOTES

- RCT has raised the possibility that democratic institutions might be dysfunctional in ways not hitherto imagined.
- RCT has 'explained' the cyclical nature of the economy in terms of electoral exigencies.
- RCT has 'explained' the tendency for party platforms to converge.
- RCT has refined our understanding of the basis on which people vote. RCT has drawn attention to the wasteful nature of activities to which government involvement in the economy gives rise.
- RCT has 'explained' the tendency of governments to get ever larger in terms of the behaviour, and the manipulation, of democratic institutions.
- RCT has brought a fresh look to behaviour of bureaucracies and bureaucrats RCT has refined our understanding of coalition formation in government through the use of new methods of analysis like game theory.26

2.3 PUBLIC CHOICE APPROACH

In economics, public choice theory is the use of modern economic tools to study problems that are traditionally in the province of political science. From the perspective of political science, it may be seen as the subset of positive political theory which deals with subjects in which *material* interests are assumed to predominate. In particular, public choice theory studies the behaviour of politicians and government officials as mostly self-interested agents and their interactions in the social system either as such or under alternative constitutional rules. These can be represented in a number of ways, including standard constrained utility maximization, game theory, or decision theory. Public choice analysis has roots in positive analysis ('what is') but is often used for normative purposes ('what ought to be'), to identify a problem or suggest how a system could be improved by changes in constitutional rules. The modern literature in 'Public Choice' began with Duncan Black, who in 1948 identified the underlying concepts of what would become median voter theory. He also wrote *The Theory of Committees and Elections* in 1958. Gordon Tullock refers to him as the 'father of public choice theory'. James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock co-authored *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy* (1962), considered one of the landmark works that founded the discipline of public choice theory. In particular, the book is about the political organization of a free society. But its method, conceptual apparatus, and analytics are derived, essentially, from the discipline that has as its subject the economic organization of such a society. The book focuses on positive economic analysis as to the development of constitutional democracy but in an ethical context of consent. The consent takes the form of a compensation principle like Pareto efficiency for making a policy change and unanimity at least no opposition as a point of departure for social choice. In public choice theory, politics are considered as a kind of transaction among people and agents. For example, policies presented to the ballot by competing political parties are assumed to give a particular pay-off to each group of voters in the construction of the model. Voters adopt these alleged outcomes as their bases of decision. Then voters choose an alternative according to their preference order. In the game theoretical framework of politics, political parties propose their policies as strategies of the game to be taken simultaneously. Then, the winner or the loser is revealed through voters' calculation of their pay-offs.

Public Choice derives its rationale from the fact that, in many areas, 'political' and 'economic' considerations interact so that a proper understanding of issues in one

Check Your Progress

1. What are the steps involved in a rational decision-making process used by a state?
2. What is rational choice theory?

NOTES

field requires a complementary understanding of issues in the other. Much of economic activity is carried out in a market environment where the protagonists are households on one hand and firms on the other. Both sides, according to the rules of economic analysis have clear objectives: households want to consume goods in quantities that will maximise their utility and firms want to produce goods in quantities that will maximize their profits. The market allows households to reveal their preferences to firms and for firms to meet these preferences in such a way that the separate decisions of millions of economic agents, acting independently of one another, are reconciled. However, a significant part of economic activity involves the state and is, therefore, carried out in a non- market environment. One reason for the existence of such nonmarket activities is the existence of 'public goods' or goods supplied by government to its citizens. Of course, the scope of non-market activity depends on the country being considered: in Sweden, a range of services like provision of child-care facilities, health, education are provided by government; in the USA these services are provided by the market. Another reason for government involvement in the economy is due to the fact that markets do not always operate efficiently. When they do not, because of 'market imperfections' leading to 'market failure', then governments have to step in to correct such inefficiencies. These interventions may take the form of corrective taxes and subsidies and/or it may take the form of regulation and directives. At the macroeconomic level, governments are responsible for stabilising and promoting its performance with respect to a number of economic variables: unemployment, inflation, the exchange rate, national income etc. But, whatever the nature, and degree, of governmental intervention in the economy, the basic problem that democratically elected governments face is of acting in a manner consistent with what its citizens desire. People express their demands through their votes; if there is a mismatch between the demand for, and supply of, outcomes then the political market will take 'corrective action' analogous to the corrective action that economic markets take when the demand for, and supply of, goods and services is not in harmony.

It was dissatisfaction with the inability and failure of traditional political science methods to address basic issues in political economy that led to the emergence of the new discipline of 'public choice'. These basic issues were *inter alia*: what factors influence votes? What is the 'best' system of voting for ensuring a correct revelation of preferences? Can the actions of individuals be made more effective when they act collectively? What is the role of re-election concerns in determining the supply of government output? Is there the possibility of conflict between different departments of government? The new discipline of public choice explicitly addressed these issues and its analysis of was explicitly predicated on the assumption that the behaviour of individuals and institutions was motivated by self-interest. In so doing, public choice theory forcefully reminds political scientists of the view held by Machiavelli and Hobbes that many, ostensibly public-spirited, policies may be motivated by self-interest; with similar force it reminds economists of the unreality of basing analysis of economic policy on the assumption that the state is a 'benevolent dictator' acting so as to do 'the greatest good for the greatest number'. More generally, the arrival of public choice signaled a shift from a 'normative' to a 'positive' analysis of the political process: the subject matter of public choice was what political actors actually do, not what they should do. A major contribution of public choice theory has been to expand our knowledge and understanding of voting procedures. The voting problem is one of selecting on the basis of the declared preferences of the electorate, one out of an available set of options. Stated in this manner, the voting problem is akin to the problem of social choice where individual preferences

NOTES

are to be aggregated to arrive at a notion of 'social welfare'. For example, every individual in society may rank different 'projects' according to the net benefits that they expect to obtain. The problem is that such a ranking by individuals may not lead to a social ranking that is to a ranking to which all individuals in society would subscribe.

Kenneth Arrow's *Social Choice and Individual Values* (1951) influenced formulation of the theory. Among other important works which deals with this approach are Anthony Downs's *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957) and Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965). In 1970 the median voter theory was accepted without question in public choice, but by 1980 it had been assaulted on so many fronts that it was almost abandoned. Works by Romer and Rosenthal (1979) and McKelvey (1976) showed that when political issues are considered multidimensional rather than single dimensional, an agenda setter could start at any point in the issue space and by strategically selecting issues end up at any other point in the issue space so that there is no unique and stable majority rule outcome. During the same decade, the probabilistic voting theory started to replace the median voter theory, since it clearly showed how it was able to find Nash Equilibrium also in multidimensional space. The theory was later completely formalized by Peter Coughlin.

Public choice theory is often used to explain how political decision- making results in outcomes that conflict with the preferences of the general public. For example, many advocacy group and pork barrel projects are not the desire of the overall democracy. However, it makes sense for politicians to support these projects. It may make them feel powerful and important. It can also benefit them financially by opening the door to future wealth as lobbyists. The project may be of interest to the politician's local constituency, increasing district votes or campaign contributions. The politician pays little or no cost to gain these benefits, as he is spending public money. Special-interest lobbyists are also behaving rationally. They can gain government favours worth millions or billions for relatively small investments. They face a risk of losing out to their competitors if they don't seek these favours. The taxpayer is also behaving rationally. The cost of defeating any one government give-away is very high while the benefits to the individual taxpayer are very small. Each citizen pays only a few pennies or a few dollars for any given government favour while the costs of ending that favour would be many times higher. Everyone involved has rational incentives to do exactly what they're doing, even though the desire of the general constituency is opposite. It is notable that the political system considered here is very much that of the United States, with 'pork' a main aim of individual legislators; in countries such as Britain with strong party systems the issues would differ somewhat. Costs are diffused, while benefits are concentrated. The voices of vocal minorities with much to gain are heard over those of indifferent majorities with little to lose.

Public choice approach is based on the normative theory of government- on the appropriate policies that the government should follow to increase the welfare of the population. But economists are not starry-eyed about the government any more than they are about the market. Government can make bad decisions or carry out good ideas badly, indeed, just as there are market failures such as monopoly and pollution, so are there 'governmental failures' in which government interventions lead to waste or distribute income in an undesirable fashion. These issues are domain of public choice theory which is the branch of economics and political science that studies the way the government make decisions. Public choice theory examines the way different voting mechanisms and shows that there are no ideal mechanisms to sum up individual preferences into

NOTES

social choices. This approach also analyses government failures which arises when state actions fail to improve economic efficiency or when the government redistributes income unfairly. Public choice theory points to issues such as the short time horizons of elected representative, the lack of a hard budget constraint, and the role of money in financing elections as a source of government failures. A careful study of government failure is crucial for understanding the limits of government and ensuring that government programmes are not excessively inclusive or wasteful.

Public choice theory attempts to look at governments from the perspective of the bureaucrats and politicians who compose them, and makes the assumption that they act based on budget-maximizing model in a self-interested way for the purpose of maximizing their own economic benefits (e.g. their personal wealth). The theory aims to apply economic analysis (usually decision theory and game theory) to the political decision-making process in order to reveal certain systematic trends towards inefficient government policies. There are also Austrian variants of public choice theory (suggested by Mises, Hayek, Kirzner, Lopez, and Boettke) in which it is assumed that bureaucrats and politicians may be benevolent but have access to limited information. The assumption that such benevolent political agents possess limited information for making decisions often results in conclusions similar to those generated separately by means of the rational self-interest assumptions. Randall Holcombe and Richard Wagner have also developed the notion of 'Political Entrepreneurship'. Public choice economists have concentrated on those pieces of political apparatus that seem most significant in concentrating the behaviour of political agents. Within democratic context the primary such piece is electoral competition. As Public choice scholars see it as the requirement that candidate/parties and the policies they submit to periodic popular election is the primary mechanism ensuring that those candidates/parties have derived interest in the interests of the citizens. To the economist eye, all other possible pieces of democratic apparatus—freedom of the press, bi-cameral legislature, even the separation of powers or the rule of law are either of second-order significance or parasitic upon electoral constrain. In the sense at least, public choice economists are democrats to the core. That is, the presence of electoral constrains, with full freedom of entry into electoral races, is a characteristic feature of democracy and without those constrain the likely hood that citizens interest would figure in the conduct if politics is seen to be minimal. Hence, although 'Public Choice' scholarship has been critical of democratic political process in terms of its capacity to achieve Pareto optimality and critical of democratic politics vis-à-vis the market place in those cases whose goods are private, democracy is never the less seen to be the best form of political organisation. And it is that question-the constraining properties of electoral competition in ensuring outcomes in accord with those that citizen want that has been the main item on the public choice agenda.

In their book, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory* (1994), political scientists Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro argue that rational choice theory (of which public choice theory is a branch) has contributed less to the field than its popularity suggests. They wrote 'the discrepancy between the faith that practitioners place in rational choice theory and its failure to deliver empirically warrants closer inspection of rational choice theorizing as a scientific enterprise'. James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock outline the limitations of their methodology 'even if the model [with its rational self-interest assumptions] proves to be useful in explaining an important element of politics, it does not imply that all individuals act in accordance with the behavioral assumption made or that any one individual acts in this way at all times… the theory of collective choice can explain only some undetermined fraction of collective action. However, so long as some

NOTES

part of all individual behavior . . . is, in fact, motivated by utility maximization, and so long as the identification of the individual with the group does not extend to the point of making all individual utility functions identical, an economic-individualist model of political activity should be of some positive worth'.

Public choice theorists have been criticized for failure to explain human actions motivated by non-rational or non-economic considerations. They respond, however, that the theory explains a broad variety of actions since humanitarian or even a madman's actions are also rational. This way public choice accounts for a much broader variety of actions than any other approach. Schram and Caterino (2006) contains a fundamental methodological criticism of public choice theory for promoting the view that the natural science model is the only appropriate methodology in social science and that political science should follow this model, with its emphasis on quantification and mathematization.

2.4 INFLUENCE OF GENERAL SYSTEM THEORY: INPUT-OUTPUT ANALYSIS (DAVID EASTON)

Systems theory is the transdisciplinary study of systems in general, with the goal of elucidating principles that can be applied to all types of systems in all fields of research. The term does not yet have a well-established, precise meaning, but systems theory can reasonably be considered a specialization of systems thinking and a generalization of systems science. The term originates from Bertalanffy's General System Theory (GST) and is used in later efforts in other fields such as the action theory of Talcott Parsons and the system-theory of Niklas Luhmann. In this context the word 'systems' is used to refer specifically to self-regulating systems that are self-correcting through feedback. Self-regulating systems are found in nature, including the physiological systems of our body, in local and global ecosystems, and in climate.

Contemporary ideas from systems theory have grown with diversified areas, exemplified by the work of Béla H. Bánáthy, ecological systems with Howard T. Odum, Eugene Odum and Fritjof Capra, organizational theory and management with individuals such as Peter Senge, interdisciplinary study with areas like Human Resource Development from the work of Richard A. Swanson, and insights from educators such as Debora Hammondand Alfonso Montuori. As a transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and multiperspectival domain, the area brings together principles and concepts from ontology, philosophy of science, physics, computer science, biology, and engineering as well as geography, sociology, political science,psychotherapy (within family systems therapy) and economics among others. Systems theory thus serves as a bridge for interdisciplinary dialogue between autonomous areas of study as well as within the area of systems science itself.

In this respect, with the possibility of misinterpretations, von Bertalanffy believed a general theory of systems 'should be an important regulative device in science,' to guard against superficial analogies that 'are useless in science and harmful in their practical consequences'. Others remain closer to the direct systems concepts developed by the original theorists. For example, Ilya Prigogine, of the Center for Complex Quantum Systemsat the University of Texas, Austin, has studied emergent properties, suggesting that they offer analogues for living systems. The theories of autopoiesis of Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana are a further development in this field. Important names in contemporary systems science include Russell Ackoff, Béla H. Bánáthy, Anthony

Check Your Progress

3. Give one reason why governments get involved in the economy.
4. In what ways do governments try to improve the economy?

Stafford Beer, Peter Checkland, Robert L. Flood, Fritjof Capra, Michael C. Jackson, Edgar Morin and Werner Ulrich among others.

With the modern foundations for a general theory of systems following the World Wars, Ervin Laszlo, in the preface for Bertalanffy's book *Perspectives on General System Theory*, maintains that the translation of 'general system theory' from German into English has 'wrought a certain amount of havoc'. The preface explains that the original concept of a general system theory was *Allgemeine Systemtheorie* (or Lehre), pointing out the fact that 'Theorie' (or Lehre) just as 'Wissenschaft' (translated Scholarship), has a much broader meaning in German than the closest English words 'theory' and 'science'. With these ideas referring to an organized body of knowledge and 'any systematically presented set of concepts, whether they are empirical, axiomatic, or philosophical, 'Lehre' is associated with theory and science in the etymology of general systems but also does not translate from the German very well; 'teaching' is the closest equivalent but sounds dogmatic and off the mark. While many of the root meanings for the idea of a 'general systems theory' might have been lost in the translation and many were led to believe that the systems theorists had articulated nothing but a pseudoscience, systems theory became a nomenclature that early investigators used to describe the interdependence of relationships in organization by defining a new way of thinking about science and scientific paradigms.

A system from this frame of reference is composed of regularly interacting or interrelating groups of activities. For example, in noting the influence in organizational psychology as the field evolved from 'an individually oriented industrial psychology to a systems and developmentally oriented organizational psychology', it was recognized that organizations are complex social systems; reducing the parts from the whole reduces the overall effectiveness of organizations. This is different from conventional models that center on individuals, structures, departments and units separate in part from the whole instead of recognizing the interdependence between groups of individuals, structures and processes that enable an organization to function. Laszlo explains that the new systems view of organized complexity went 'one step beyond the Newtonian view of organized simplicity' in reducing the parts from the whole, or in understanding the whole without relation to the parts. The relationship between organizations and their environments became recognized as the foremost source of complexity and interdependence. In most cases the whole has properties that cannot be known from analysis of the constituent elements in isolation. Béla H. Bánáthy, who argued—along with the founders of the systems society—that 'the benefit of humankind' is the purpose of science, has made significant and far-reaching contributions to the area of systems theory. For the Primer Group at ISSS, Bánáthy defines a perspective that iterates this view:

The systems view is a world-view that is based on the discipline of system inquiry. Central to systems inquiry is the concept of system. In the most general sense, system means a configuration of parts connected and joined together by a web of relationships. The Primer group defines system as a family of relationships among the members acting as a whole. Von Bertalanffy defined system as 'elements in standing relationship'.

Similar ideas are found in learning theories that developed from the same fundamental concepts, emphasizing how understanding results from knowing concepts both in part and as a whole. In fact, Bertalanffy's organismic psychology paralleled the learning theory of Jean Piaget. Interdisciplinary perspectives are critical in breaking away from industrial age models and thinking where history is history and math is math, the arts and sciences specialized and separate, and where teaching is treated

NOTES

NOTES

as behaviorist conditioning. The influential contemporary work of Peter Senge provides detailed discussion of the commonplace critique of educational systems grounded in conventional assumptions about learning, including the problems with fragmented knowledge and lack of holistic learning from the 'machine-age thinking' that became a 'model of school separated from daily life'. It is in this way that systems theorists attempted to provide alternatives and an evolved ideation from orthodox theories with individuals such as Max Weber, Émile Durkheim in sociology and Frederick Winslow Taylor in scientific management which were grounded in classical assumptions. The theorists sought holistic methods by developing systems concepts that could be integrated with different areas.

The contradiction of reductionism in conventional theory (which has as its subject a single part) is simply an example of changing assumptions. The emphasis with systems theory shifts from parts to the organization of parts, recognizing interactions of the parts are not 'static' and constant but 'dynamic' processes. Conventional closed systems were questioned with the development of open systems perspectives. The shift was from absolute and universal authoritative principles and knowledge to relative and general conceptual and perceptual knowledge, still in the tradition of theorists that sought to provide means in organizing human life. Meaning, the history of ideas that preceded were rethought not lost. Mechanistic thinking was particularly critiqued, especially the industrial- age mechanistic metaphor of the mind from interpretations of Newtonian mechanics by enlightenment philosophers and later psychologists that laid the foundations of modern organizational theory and management by the late 19th century. Classical science had not been overthrown but questions arose over core assumptions that historically influenced organized systems within both social and technical sciences.

Whether considering the first systems of written communication with Sumerian cuneiform to Mayan numerals or the feats of engineering with the Egyptian pyramids, systems thinking in essence dates back to antiquity. Differentiated from Western rationalist traditions of philosophy, C. West Churchman often identified with the I Ching as a systems approach sharing a frame of reference similar to pre- Socraticphilosophy and Heraclitus. Von Bertalanffy traced systems concepts to the philosophy of G.W. von Leibniz and Nicholas of Cusa's *coincidentia oppositorum*. While modern systems are considerably more complicated, today's systems are embedded in history.

An important step to introduce the *systems approach*, into (rationalist) hard sciences of the 19th century, was the energy transformation, by figures like James Joule and Sadi Carnot. Then, the thermodynamic of this century, with Rudolf Clausius, Josiah Gibbs and others, built the *system* reference model, as a formal scientific object.

Systems theory as an area of study specifically developed following the World Wars from the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Anatol Rapoport, Kenneth E. Boulding, William Ross Ashby, Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, C. West Churchman and others in the 1950s, specifically catalyzed by the cooperation in the Society for General Systems Research. Cognizant of advances in science that questioned classical assumptions in the organizational sciences, Bertalanffy's idea to develop a theory of systems began as early as the interwar period, publishing 'An Outline for General Systems Theory' in the *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, Vol 1, No. 2, 1950. Where assumptions in Western science from Greek thought with Plato and Aristotle to Newton's *Principia* have historically influenced all areas from the hard to social sciences, the original theorists explored the implications of twentieth century advances in terms of systems.

NOTES

Subjects like complexity, self-organization, connectionism and adaptive systems had already been studied in the 1940s and 1950s. In fields like cybernetics, researchers like Norbert Wiener, William Ross Ashby, John von Neumann and Heinz von Foerster examined complex systems using mathematics. John von Neumann discovered cellular automata and self-reproducing systems, again with only pencil and paper. Aleksandr Lyapunov and Jules Henri Poincaré worked on the foundations of chaos theory without any computer at all. At the same time Howard T. Odum, the radiation ecologist, recognised that the study of general systems required a language that could depict energetics, thermodynamic and kinetics at any system scale. Odum developed a general systems, or Universal language, based on the circuit language ofelectronics to fulfill this role, known as the Energy Systems Language. From 1929–1951, Robert Maynard Hutchins at the University of Chicago had undertaken efforts to encourage innovation and interdisciplinary research in the social sciences, aided by the Ford Foundation with the interdisciplinary division of the Social Sciences established in 1931. Numerous scholars had been actively engaged in ideas before (Tectology of Alexander Bogdanov published in 1912–1917 is a remarkable example), but in 1937 von Bertalanffy presented the general theory of systems for a conference at the University of Chicago.

The systems view was based on several fundamental ideas. First, all phenomena can be viewed as a web of relationships among elements, or a system. Second, all systems, whether electrical, biological, or social, have common patterns, behaviors, and properties that can be understood and used to develop greater insight into the behavior of complex phenomena and to move closer toward a unity of science. System philosophy, methodology and application are complementary to this science. By 1956, the 'Society for General Systems Research' was established, renamed the 'International Society for Systems Science' in 1988. The Cold War affected the research project for systems theory in ways that sorely disappointed many of the seminal theorists. Some began to recognize theories defined in association with systems theory had deviated from the initial General Systems Theory (GST) view. The economist Kenneth Boulding, an early researcher in systems theory, had concerns over the manipulation of systems concepts. Boulding concluded from the effects of the Cold War that abuses of power always prove consequential and that systems theory might address such issues. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a renewed interest in systems theory with efforts to strengthen an ethical view.

Many early systems theorists aimed at finding a general systems theory that could explain all systems in all fields of science. The term goes back to Bertalanffy's book titled *General System theory: Foundations, Development, Applications* from 1968. According to Von Bertalanffy, he developed the 'allgemeine Systemlehre' (general systems teachings) first via lectures beginning in 1937 and then via publications beginning in 1946.

Von Bertalanffy's objective was to bring together under one heading the organismic science that he had observed in his work as a biologist. His desire was to use the word 'system' to describe those principles which are common to systems in general. In GST, he writes:

. . . there exist models, principles, and laws that apply to generalized systems or their subclasses, irrespective of their particular kind, the nature of their component elements, and the relationships or 'forces' between them. It seems legitimate to ask for a theory, not of systems of a more or less special kind, but of universal principles applying to systems in general.

NOTES

Ervin Laszlo in the preface of von Bertalanffy's book *Perspectives on General System Theory*:

Thus when von Bertalanffy spoke of Allgemeine Systemtheorie it was consistent with his view that he was proposing a new perspective, a new way of doing science. It was not directly consistent with an interpretation often put on 'general system theory' that it is a (scientific) 'theory of general systems'. To criticize it as such is to shoot at straw men. Von Bertalanffy opened up something much broader and of much greater significance than a single theory (which, as we now know, can always be falsified and has usually an ephemeral existence): he created a new paradigm for the development of theories. Ludwig von Bertalanffy outlines systems inquiry into three major domains: philosophy, science, and technology.

The term cybernetics derives from a Greek word which meant steersman, and which is the origin of English words such as 'govern'. Cybernetics is the study of feedback and derived concepts such as communication and control in living organisms, machines and organisations. Its focus is how anything (digital, mechanical or biological) processes information, reacts to information and changes or can be changed to better accomplish the first two tasks.

The terms 'systems theory' and 'cybernetics' have been widely used as synonyms. Some authors use the term *cybernetic* systems to denote a proper subset of the class of general systems, namely those systems that include feedback loops. However Gordon Pask's differences of eternal interacting actor loops (that produce finite products) make general systems a proper subset of cybernetics. According to Jackson, von Bertalanffy promoted an embryonic form of general system theory (GST) as early as the 1920s and 1930s but it was not until the early 1950s it became more widely known in scientific circles.

Threads of cybernetics began in the late 1800s that led toward the publishing of seminal works (e.g., Wiener's *Cybernetics* in 1948 and von Bertalanffy's *General Systems Theory* in 1968). Cybernetics arose more from engineering fields and GST from biology. If anything it appears that although the two probably mutually influenced each other, cybernetics had the greater influence. Von Bertalanffy specifically makes the point of distinguishing between the areas in noting the influence of cybernetics: 'Systems theory is frequently identified with cybernetics and control theory. This again is incorrect. Cybernetics as the theory of control mechanisms in technology and nature is founded on the concepts of information and feedback, but as part of a general theory of systems; then reiterates: 'the model is of wide application but should not be identified with "systems theory" in general', and that 'warning is necessary against its incautious expansion to fields for which its concepts are not made'. Jackson (2000) also claims von Bertalanffy was informed by Alexander Bogdanov's three volume *Tectology* that was published in Russia between 1912 and 1917, and was translated into German in 1928. He also states it is clear to Gorelik (1975) that the 'conceptual part' of general system theory (GST) had first been put in place by Bogdanov. The similar position is held by Mattessich (1978) and Capra (1996). Ludwig von Bertalanffy never even mentioned Bogdanov in his works, which Capra (1996) finds 'surprising'.

Cybernetics, catastrophe theory, chaos theory and complexity theory have the common goal to explain complex systems that consist of a large number of mutually interacting and interrelated parts in terms of those interactions. Cellular automata (CA), neural networks (NN), artificial intelligence (AI), and artificial life (ALife) are related fields, but they do not try to describe general (universal) complex (singular) systems.

NOTES

The best context to compare the different 'C'-Theories about complex systems is historical, which emphasizes different tools and methodologies, from pure mathematics in the beginning to pure computer science now. Since the beginning of chaos theory when Edward Lorenz accidentally discovered a strange attractor with his computer, computers have become an indispensable source of information. One could not imagine the study of complex systems without the use of computers today.

The introduction of the system analysis in social sciences owes its genesis to the realisation of some reading American writers like David Easton, G.A. Almond and Morton A. Kaplan who have reacted against the traditional tendency of rigid compartmentalisation of any discipline belonging to the world of social sciences like economics or politics, psychology or sociology, that, in their views has resulted in nothing else then a reduction of the cross-flows between various sister fields of study. These new social scientists drew inspiration from the contributions of natural scientists like Ludwig Von Bertallanfy who pioneered the movement of unification for all natural sciences. Several important conferences were held in leading American educational institutions to explore the possibilities of scientific research towards a unified theory of human behaviour. However, the setting of up the Society for the Advancement of the General System Research in 1956 makes a very important event under whose auspices annual year books appeared to throw special focus on the areas of general system theory. The introduction of general system theory thus became a matter of fashionable study. According to O.R. Young, the central and guiding notion that they developed in this quest was the concept of system which has since become the basic conceptual asset of general system theory. Different writers have used and defined the word 'system' differently. According to Ludwig Von Bertallanfy, system is a set of elements standing in interaction.

Hall and Fagen defined system as a set of objects together with relations between the object and between their attitudes. According to Collin Cherry, system is a whole which is compounded of many parts- ensemble of attitudes. Mortan A Kaplan wrote 'A brief and non technical description of the object of systems analysis would include; the study of a set of inter related variables, as a distinguished from the environment of the set, and of the ways in which this set is maintained under the impact of environmental disturbances'.

David Apter has outlined three main characteristics of systems as follows:

- Systems have boundaries within which there are functional inter relationships mainly based on some of the communications.
- Systems are divided into sub-systems, with exchanges existing between the sub systems.
- Systems have a capacity for coding-that is, they take informational inputs; are able to learn from inputs, and translate inputs into some kind of output.

In a nutshell, in a system there is a relationship between information and the use of energy. The relationship between coding and the use of energy out puts is transformational. The result is a general systems paradigm which can be applied to different system levels, each with its own boundaries: cells, organs, individuals, groups, societies or what ever. The general system model, then, uses energy and information input control mechanism, memory banks, checking instruments, and outputs which generate new energy and information.

System is not taken as a mere random aggregation of elements; it is composed of elements all at a level interdependence that can be located with some precision both in time and in space. A system may have to constructs-homological and interlocking. While

NOTES

the former, also known as isomorphism signifies 'one to one correspondence' between objects, in different systems which preserves the relationship between two objects, the letter refers more directly to scale effects and to the vertical or hierarchical association of systems. A study of system analysis forms a significant part of multi disciplinary or, more correctly stated, and interdisciplinary approach. System theory in its particular aspects relating to natural sciences like those of physics and biology is fundamentally different from the general theory of all systems where we find serious attempts to conceptualise a framework based on certain hypotheses and concepts that may be roughly applicable to various branches of social sciences. The advocates of system analysis believe that there are a number of theories common to various disciplines and that give only they can be put in an abstract form, a general theory can emerge that might help each discipline use as a broad conceptual in its general prescriptive before its enters into a more detailed research.

The basic concept used in the elaboration of the general system theory may be put into three categories-(i) concepts of descriptive nature of those which can also be used as tools of classificatory variables; (ii) concepts that relate to the regulation and maintenance of a system; and (iii) concepts that through light on the forces that bring about change in the system.

The first category include concepts that lay down the line of differences between various kinds of systems like a democratic or open and a non democratic or close system, or an organisimic and a non organisimic system. Second category constitutes the key part of the general system theory as the real stress of this theory is on the regulation and maintenance of the system. Here it is found several important concepts that have their relationship with the forces that play their role in the regulation or maintenance of a system. Third category meant that change is the law of nature, but this change can be both disruptive and non disruptive.

The most important name in the list of recent political scientists subscribing to the use of systems analysis is that of David Easton. His monumental work *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* published in 1965 was appreciated by leading writers on contemporary empirical political theory as providing an original set of concepts for arranging at the level of theory and interpreting political phenomena in a new and helpful way. David Easton's effort to build an empirically oriented political theory evolves through three phases, each represented by the publication of a major work. The first of these works, *The Political System* (1953), presented a case for general theory in political science. The second, *A Frame Work for Political Analysis* (1965), set for the major concepts for the development of such a general theory. The third, *A System Analysis of Political Life* (1965), attempted to elaborate those concepts in the hope that they might become empirically applicable. In fact, Easton attempted later to move his theory toward an empirical situation.

In simple terms, Easton's behavioral approach to politics, proposed that a political system could be seen as a delimited (i.e. all political systems have precise boundaries) and fluid (changing) system of steps in decision making. Greatly simplifying his model:

- Step 1. Changes in the social or physical environment surrounding a political system produce 'demands' and 'supports' for action or the status quo directed as 'inputs' towards the political system, through political behavior.
- Step 2. These demands and supporting groups stimulate competition in a political system, leading to decisions or 'outputs' directed at some aspect of the surrounding social or physical environment.

NOTES

- Step 3. After a decision or output is made (e.g., a specific policy), it interacts with its environment, and if it produces change in the environment, there are 'outcomes'.
- Step 4. When a new policy interacts with its environment, outcomes may generate new demands or supports and groups in support or against the policy ('feedback') or a new policy on some related matter.
- Step 5. Feedback leads back to Step 1, it's a never ending story.

If the system functions as described, then we have a 'stable political system'. If the system breaks down, then we have a 'dysfunctional political system'.

2.4.1 Political Analysis

Easton aspired to make politics a science, working with highly abstract models that described the regularities of patterns and processes in political life in general. In his view, the highest level of abstraction could make scientific generalizations about politics possible. To sum it, politics should be seen as a whole, not as a collection of different problems to be solved.

His main model was driven by an organic view of politics, as if it were a living object. His theory is a statement of what makes political systems adapt and survive. He describes politics in a constant flux, thereby rejecting the idea of 'equilibrium', so prevalent in some other political theories. Moreover, he rejects the idea that politics could be examined by looking at different levels of analysis. His abstractions could account for any group and demand at any given time. That is, interest group theory and elite theory can be subsumed in political systems analysis. His theory was and is highly influential in the pluralist tradition in political science.

Initially Easton argued that scientific knowledge is theoretical and based on facts but facts alone do not explain events and must be ordered in some way. Further, the study of political life involves the political system as a whole rather then solution for particular problems. Theory must combined with reliable knowledge and empirical data; psychological data on personalities and motivation of participants and situational data saved by environmental influences. Easton quest for theory involved the formulation of a general framework, a focus on the whole system rather then merely on its part, an awareness of environmental influences upon the system, and recognitions of the differences between political life in equilibrium and in disequilibrium. Easton rejected the concept of the state by referring to the confusion and variety of meanings; system for him permits clear conceptualisation. Like wise, power is understood as only one of many significant concepts useful in the study of political life. Power, however relates to the shaping and carrying out of authoritative politics in a society.

Easton identified some attributes of political system in an attempt to move in the direction of a general political theory. These attributes were: (i) properties of identification in the form of units and boundaries (ii) inputs and outputs (iii) differentiation within a system and (iv) integration within a system.

Each attribute was described and illustrated through a 'primitive' diagram which is produced in the figure 1.1. This diagram shows that the 'political system' receives 'inputs' form the 'environment' in the form of 'demands' and 'supports'; it produces 'output' in the form of 'policies and decisions'. The 'output' flow back into the environment through a feedback mechanism. According to Easton demands are the raw materials out of which finished products called decisions are manufactured. He has characterised supports as the energy in the form of actions for orientations enabling the political system to convert the demand into authoritative decisions and policies. Demand may arise from

NOTES

any source-the people, politicians, administrators, opinion leaders and so on depending on the nature of the regime. The extent of support is bound to vary depending on the expectation of the people from their political system. Variability of support is bound to effect the destinies of the political authorities (upon called governments), the regime (democratic, authoritarian, and the like), and the political community. Outputs are produced by the political system through special processes that ensure their acceptance as binding by must members of the society most of the time.

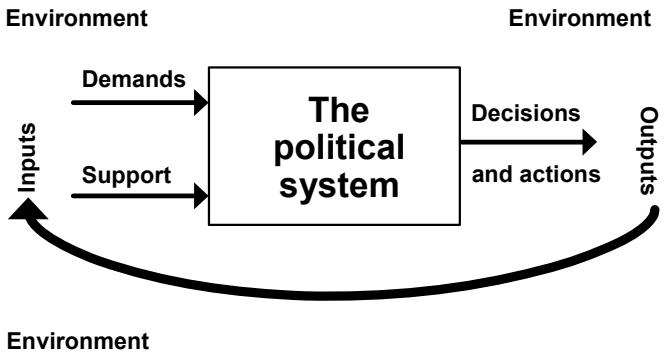

Fig. 2.1 *David Easton Diagram of a Political System*

2.4.2 Criticism

Easton is concerned with clarifying and simplifying concepts related to an excessive pre-occupation with stability, maintenance, persistence, and equilibrium, a tendency derived from biology. For example Easton refers to 'authoritative allocation of values' as the 'life processes' of the political system. Yet this idea can lead to some 'misleading assumption on which to constructed adequate theory of politics'. According to Thorson, Easton was unable to deal with particular changes. In his words 'We can in no sense then regard Easton's theory as a theory of political science-as a theory which answers questions concerning why any particular political change occurred'.

Another criticism against Easton's framework is that he posted some generalisations, but his framework yielded few, any, testable hypotheses. According to Eugene Miller, the ideological underpinnings of the framework pose a problem. He noted that early in his writings Easton was concerned with an intellectual crisis and the imminent waning of democratic liberalism. In his assessment, Miller concluded that Easton failed to identify 'the object of political inquiry', and he questioned 'if system analysis, as a kind of political biology, is concerned with questions that are, properly speaking, political in nature'. Theodore J. Lowi noted that when Easton and Estonised turned empirical within the system context, they literally stepped outside the political system all together and studied political socialisation. It is also criticised that Easton's definition of terms like 'politics' and 'political system' based on the ingredient of 'essay top interactions' are so broad that one fails to apply the line of distinction between an abstract and a concrete political system. According to S.P.Verma, Easton in his serious effort to move away from the institutional to the behavioural approach found himself hanging somewhere in the middle'.

Systems analysis is concerned with the life processes of any and all political systems rather than with 'the specific structures or processes that make a particular kind of regime viable'. We must ask, however, if systems analysis, as a kind of political

NOTES

biology, is concerned with questions that are, properly speaking, political in nature. As far as human beings are concerned, we distinguish between the biological problem of how life is sustained and the ethical problem of the way of life that men should choose. From the ethical standpoint, the central phenomenon is not a man's life processes but his character. The fact that men have common life processes is of much less significance than the fact that they have different characters. A man must be alive in order to have an identity, but his identity is determined not by his vital processes but by his character and way of life. Political things must be understood by analogy with ethics rather than biology. A political society must exist if its members are to choose a regime and therewith a way of life, but the society owes its identity to the kind of regime and way of life that is chosen, not to processes that sustain any kind of regime whatever. The study of identity and change in political life must take its, bearings by changes in regimes, not by the disappearance or death of authoritative decision-making as such. If a study of political change is to make an intelligent distinction between beneficial and harmful changes, it must be guided by an understanding of the good and just regime. Earlier, we found reason to doubt that Easton's conception of knowledge permits a reliable answer to the question of the good political order. We now find that the question does not arise in his conceptual framework because he turns away from the regime as the focus of political inquiry. It is not merely accidental that Easton has failed to develop the 'value theory' which he has long advocated. His theoretical position does not favour the revival of serious inquiry about the ends of political life.

Despite these points of criticism, it cannot be denied that general system theory proper has been utilised very little in the social sciences and that it is, therefore, difficult to judge its utility in a definitive manner at this stage. It may be expected that this theory may achieve a high standing as an approach to political analysis but it is too early to make any definitive judgements on this question. However, it can be said that the frame work of system analysis has been found very useful for the comparative analysis of diverse political units, such as, modernised as well as developing polities. It has also been extensively used for an analysis of the international political system. The model of political system has also solved as a basis for Gabriel Almond's model of structural-functional analysis, as also for Karl Dutsch's model of communication theory. In a nutshell, it represents a substantial advance in the direction of constructing a theoretical framework for within political science.

2.5 STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM (ALMOND AND POWELL)

Structural functionalism is a broad perspective in sociology and anthropology which sets out to interpret society as a structure with interrelated parts. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as 'organs' that work toward the proper functioning of the 'body' as a whole. In the most basic terms, it simply emphasises 'the effort to impute, as rigorously as possible, to each feature, custom, or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system'. For Talcott Parsons, 'structural-functionalism' came to describe a particular stage in the methodological development of social science, rather than a specific school of thought. Parsons called his own theory for action theory and argued again and again that the

Check Your Progress

5. Define the Systems theory.
6. What was an important step to introduce the Systems approach into the (rationalist) hard sciences of the 19th century?

NOTES

term structural-functionalism was a misleading and inappropriate label to use as a name of his theory.

Classical functionalist theories are defined by a tendency towards biological analogy and notions of social evolutionism. Whilst one may regard functionalism as a logical extension of the organic analogies for society presented by political philosophers such as Rousseau, sociology draws firmer attention to those institutions unique to industrialised capitalist society (or *modernity*). Functionalism also has an anthropological basis in the work of theorists such as Marcel Mauss, Bronis aw Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. It is in Radcliffe-Brown's specific usage that the prefix 'structural' emerged. Durkheim proposed that most stateless, 'primitive' societies, lacking strong centralised institutions, are based on an association of corporate-descent groups. Structural functionalism also took on Malinowski's argument that the basic building block of society is the nuclear family, and that the clan is an outgrowth, not vice versa. Durkheim was concerned with the question of how certain societies maintain internal stability and survive over time. He proposed that such societies tend to be segmented, with equivalent parts held together by shared values, common symbols or, as his nephew Marcel Mauss held, systems of exchanges. In modern, complicated societies, members perform very different tasks, resulting in a strong interdependence. Based on the metaphor above of an organism in which many parts function together to sustain the whole, Durkheim argued that complicated societies are held together by organic solidarity.

These views were upheld by Radcliffe-Brown, who, following Comte, believed that society constitutes a separate 'level' of reality, distinct from both biological and inorganic matter. Explanations of social phenomena had therefore to be constructed within this level, individuals being merely transient occupants of comparatively stable social roles. The central concern of structural functionalism is a continuation of the Durkheimian task of explaining the apparent stability and internal cohesion needed by societies to endure over time. Societies are seen as coherent, bounded and fundamentally relational constructs that function like organisms, with their various parts (or social institutions) working together in an unconscious, quasi-automatic fashion toward achieving an overall social equilibrium. All social and cultural phenomena are therefore seen as functional in the sense of working together, and are effectively deemed to have 'lives' of their own. They are primarily analyzed in terms of this function. The individual is significant not in and of himself but rather in terms of his status, his position in patterns of social relations, and the behaviours associated with his status. The social structure, then, is the network of statuses connected by associated roles. It is simplistic to equate the perspective directly with political conservativism. The tendency to emphasise 'cohesive systems', however, leads functionalist theories to be contrasted with 'conflict theories' which instead emphasise social problems and inequalities.

2.5.1 Prominent Theorists

Herbert Spencer, a British philosopher famous for applying the theory of natural selection to society, was in many ways the first true sociological functionalist; in fact, while Durkheim is widely considered the most important functionalist among positivist theorists, it is well known that much of his analysis was culled from reading Spencer's work, especially his *Principles of Sociology* (1874–96).

While most avoid the tedious tasks of reading Spencer's massive volumes (filled as they are with long passages explicating the organic analogy, with reference to cells, simple organisms, animals, humans and society), there are some important insights that

NOTES

have quietly influenced many contemporary theorists, including Talcott Parsons, in his early work 'The Structure of Social Action' (1937), Cultural anthropology, too, uses functionalism consistently.

This evolutionary model, unlike most 19th century evolutionary theories, is cyclical, beginning with the differentiation and increasing complication of an organic or 'super-organic' (Spencer's term for a social system) body, followed by a fluctuating state of equilibrium and disequilibrium (or a state of adjustment and adaptation), and, finally, a stage of disintegration or dissolution. Following Thomas Malthus' population principles, Spencer concluded that society is constantly facing selection pressures (internal and external) that force it to adapt its internal structure through differentiation.

Every solution, however, causes a new set of selection pressures that threaten society's viability. It should be noted that Spencer was not a determinist in the sense that he never said that:

- selection pressures will be felt in time to change them;
- they will be felt and reacted to; or
- the solutions will always work.

In fact, he was in many ways a political sociologist, and recognised that the degree of centralised and consolidated authority in a given polity could make or break its ability to adapt. In other words, he saw a general trend towards the centralisation of power as leading to stagnation and, ultimately, pressure to decentralise.

More specifically, Spencer recognised three functional needs or prerequisites that produce selection pressures: they are regulatory, operative (production) and distributive. He argued that all societies need to solve problems of control and coordination production of goods, services and ideas, and, finally, to find ways of distributing these resources.

Initially, in tribal societies, these three needs are inseparable, and the kinship system is the dominant structure that satisfies them. As many scholars have noted, all institutions are subsumed under kinship organisation, but, with increasing population (both in terms of sheer numbers and density), problems emerge with regards to feeding individuals, creating new forms of organisation—consider the emergent division of labour—, coordinating and controlling various differentiated social units, and developing systems of resource distribution.

The solution as Spencer sees it, is to differentiate structures to fulfill more specialised functions; thus a chief or 'big man' emerges, soon followed by a group of lieutenants, and later kings and administrators. Perhaps Spencer's greatest obstacle to being widely discussed in modern sociology is the fact that much of his social philosophy is rooted in the social and historical context of Ancient Eqyptian times. He coined the term 'survival of the fittest' in discussing the simple fact that small tribes or societies tend to be defeated or conquered by larger ones. Of course, many sociologists still use him (knowingly or otherwise) in their analyses, as is especially the case in the recent re-emergence of evolutionary theory.

Talcott Parsons

Talcott Parsons was heavily influenced by Durkheim and Max Weber, synthesising much of their work into his action theory, which he based on the system-theoretical concept and the methodological principle of voluntary action. He held that 'the social system is made up of the actions of individuals.' His starting point, accordingly, is the interaction between two individuals faced with a variety of choices about how they

NOTES

might act, choices that are influenced and constrained by a number of physical and social factors.

Parsons determined that each individual has expectations of the other's action and reaction to his own behavior, and that these expectations would (if successful) be 'derived' from the accepted norms and values of the society they inhabit. As Parsons himself emphasised, however, in a general context there would never exist any perfect 'fit' between behaviours and norms, so such a relation is never complete or 'perfect'.

Social norms were always problematic for Parsons, who never claimed (as has often been alleged) that social norms were generally accepted and agreed upon, should this prevent some kind of universal law. Whether social norms were accepted or not was for Parsons simply a historical question. As behaviors are repeated in more interactions, and these expectations are entrenched or institutionalised, a role is created. Parsons defines a 'role' as the normatively- regulated participation 'of a person in a concrete process of social interaction with specific, concrete role-partners'. Although any individual, theoretically, can fulfill any role, the individual is expected to conform to the norms governing the nature of the role they fulfill.

Furthermore, one person can and does fulfill many different roles at the same time. In one sense, an individual can be seen to be a 'composition' of the roles he inhabits. Certainly, today, when asked to describe themselves, most people would answer with reference to their societal roles. Parsons later developed the idea of roles into collectivities of roles that complement each other in fulfilling functions for society. Some roles are bound up in institutions and social structures (economic, educational, legal and even gender-based). These are functional in the sense that they assist society in operating and fulfilling its functional needs so that society runs smoothly. A society where there is no conflict, where everyone knows what is expected of him and where these expectations are consistently met, is in a perfect state of equilibrium. The key processes for Parsons in attaining this equilibrium are socialisation and social control. Socialisation is important because it is the mechanism for transferring the accepted norms and values of society to the individuals within the system. Perfect socialisation occurs when these norms and values are completely internalised, when they become part of the individual's personality.

Parson states that 'this point is independent of the sense in which [the] individual is concretely autonomous or creative rather than 'passive' or 'conforming', for individuality and creativity, are to a considerable extent, phenomena of the institutionalization of expectations'; they are culturally constructed. Socialisation is supported by the positive and negative sanctioning of role behaviours that do or do not meet these expectations. A punishment could be informal, like a snigger or gossip, or more formalised, through institutions such as prisons and mental homes. If these two processes were perfect, society would become static and unchanging, and in reality this is unlikely to occur for long. Parsons recognises this, stating that he treats 'the structure of the system as problematic and subject to change', and that his concept of the tendency towards equilibrium 'does not imply the empirical dominance of stability over change'. He does, however, believe that these changes occur in a relatively smooth way.

Individuals in interaction with changing situations adapt through a process of 'role bargaining'. Once the roles are established, they create norms that guide further action and are thus institutionalised, creating stability across social interactions. Where the adaptation process cannot adjust, due to sharp shocks or immediate radical change, structural dissolution occurs and either new structures (therefore a new system) are

formed, or society dies. This model of social change has been described as a 'moving equilibrium', and emphasises a desire for social order.

Robert Merton

NOTES

Robert K. Merton was a functionalist and he fundamentally agreed with Parsons' theory. However, he acknowledged that it was problematic, believing that it was too generalized. Merton tended to emphasise middle range theory rather than a grand theory, meaning that he was able to deal specifically with some of the limitations in Parsons' theory. He identified three main limitations: functional unity, universal functionalism and indispensability. He also developed the concept of deviance and made the distinction between manifest and latent functions.

Merton criticised functional unity, saying that not all parts of a modern, complex society work for the functional unity of society. Some institutions and structures may have other functions, and some may even be generally dysfunctional, or be functional for some while being dysfunctional for others. This is because not all structures are functional for society as a whole. Some practices are only functional for a dominant individual or a group. Here Merton introduces the concepts of power and coercion into functionalism and identifies the sites of tension which may lead to struggle or conflict. Merton states that by recognizing and examining the dysfunctional aspects of society we can explain the development and persistence of alternatives. Thus, as Holmwood states, 'Merton explicitly made power and conflict central issues for research within a functionalist paradigm'. Merton also noted that there may be functional alternatives to the institutions and structures currently fulfilling the functions of society. This means that the institutions that currently exist are not indispensable to society. Merton states that 'just as the same item may have multiple functions, so may the same function be diversely fulfilled by alternative items'. This notion of functional alternatives is important because it reduces the tendency of functionalism to imply approval of the status quo.

Merton's theory of deviance is derived from Durkheim's idea of anomie. It is central in explaining how internal changes can occur in a system. For Merton, anomie means a discontinuity between cultural goals and the accepted methods available for reaching them.

Merton believes that there are five situations facing an actor:

- Conformity occurs when an individual has the means and desire to achieve the cultural goals socialised into him.
- Innovation occurs when an individual strives to attain the accepted cultural goals but chooses to do so in novel or unaccepted method.
- Ritualism occurs when an individual continues to do things as proscribed by society but forfeits the achievement of the goals.
- Retreatism is the rejection of both the means and the goals of society.
- Rebellion is a combination of the rejection of societal goals and means and a substitution of other goals and means.

Thus it can be seen that change can occur internally in society through either innovation or rebellion. It is true that society will attempt to control these individuals and negate the changes but as the innovation or rebellion builds momentum, society will eventually adapt or face dissolution.

NOTES

The last of Merton's important contributions to functionalism was his distinction between manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions refer to the conscious intentions of actors; latent functions are the objective consequences of their actions, which are often unintended. Merton used the example of the Hopi rain dance to show that sometimes an individual's understanding of their motive for an action may not fully explain why that action continues to be performed.

Almond and Powell

In the 1970s, political scientists Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell introduced a structural-functionalist approach to compare political systems. They argued that in order to understand a political system, it is necessary to understand not only its institutions (or structures) but also their respective functions. They also insisted that these institutions, to be properly understood, must be placed in a meaningful and dynamic historical context.

This idea stood in marked contrast to prevalent approaches in the field of comparative politics—the state-society theory and the dependency theory. These were the descendants of David Easton's system theory in international relations, a mechanistic view that saw all political systems as essentially the same, subject to the same laws of 'stimulus and response'—or inputs and outputs—while paying little attention to unique characteristics. The structural-functional approach is based on the view that a political system is made up of several key components, including interest groups, political parties and branches of government.

In addition to structures, Almond and Powell showed that a political system consists of various functions, chief among them political socialisation, recruitment and communication: socialisation refers to the way in which societies pass along their values and beliefs to succeeding generations, and in political terms describes the process by which a society inculcates civic virtues, or the habits of effective citizenship; recruitment denotes the process by which a political system generates interest, engagement and participation from citizens; and communication refers to the way that a system promulgates its values and information.

Like system analysis, structural functional analysis is also based on the concept of political system. This model of political analysis has been more widely used in the sphere of comparative politics because it provides for standard categories for different types of political systems. The concept of structural functional analysis originated in the sphere of social anthropology in the writings of Redcliff-Brown and B. Malinowski. Then it was developed in the field of sociology by Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton and Marion Levy. Gabriel Almond and his associates developed it into a tool of political analysis. In the introduction to a collective work co edited with James S. Coleman, *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (1960) Almond renovated the concept of comparative politics. Political system replaced the state and the legal and institutional apparatus employed by traditional political scientists. Function substituted for power, role for office, and structure for institution. They identified four characteristics of the political system:

- all political systems have political structures;
- the same functions are performed in all political systems with different frequencies and by different kinds of structures;

- all political structures are multi functional; and
- all political systems are 'mist' systems in the cultural sense, i.e. they are based on a culture which is always the mixture of the modern and the traditional.

NOTES

Instead of focusing on such concepts as institutions, organisation or group, Almond turned to role and structured. Roles being the interacting units of the political system and structures representing the patterns of interaction. He also introduced the concept of political culture, which he conceived of as embedded in a particular pattern of orientations to political action with these patterns usually extending beyond the boundaries of the political system.

Gabriel Almond and G.B. Powell in their book *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (1966) further developed this approach. They argued that all political systems regardless of their type must perform a specific set of tasks if they are to remain in existence as systems in working order or in equilibrium, i.e. as 'on going systems'. These are the functional requirements of the system. With this assumption they sought to modify David Easton's model of the political system, suggesting that 'inputs' and 'out puts' recognised by Easton can be understood as 'functions' or ' functional requisites' of political system. They sought to redefine these inputs and out puts with a deeper understanding of political process and proceeded to identified various structures corresponding to these function, in order to evolve a 'structural-functional' framework. According to them in various political systems these functions may be performed by different kinds of political structures and, sometimes, even by structures which are not overtly recognised as being, primarily, 'political'. Almond presents a seven fold classification of the functional variables in his input-output model. He mentions four input functions and three output functions. Input functions are: (i) political socialisation and recruitment; (ii) interest articulation; (iii) interest aggregation and (iv) political communication. He also mentions three variables in his category of output functions. They are: (i) rule making; (ii) rule application and (iii) rule adjudication. Output functions are correspondent to conventional governmental functions, which are performed by the formal governmental organs like legislature (rule making), executive (rule application) and judiciary (rule adjudication). According to Almond input functions are performed by non-governmental structures or institutions. He further said that all structures are multi functional, yet some structures are especially suited for specific purposes.

Almond elaborates his input functions further. The first function political socialisation is the process where by an individual acquires attitudes and orientations towards political phenomena. It also implies the process where by society transmits political norms and believes form one generation to the next. Recruitment stands for the process where by political groups obtained members for various important roles in the political process, either in addition to the existing members or as replacement for other members. Since political socialisation prepares the individual to assume various important role in the social structure it is instrumental to recruitment also. The main institutions which perform these functions are family, school and other primary groups. The second input functions, interest articulation implies the processes where by opinions, attitudes, believe, preferences etc are converted into coherent demands on the political system. This function may be performed y various structures, but interest groups are must suited to perform this function. The third input function the interest aggregation is the process where by various divergent interest are collated and translated into concrete demands of

NOTES

a very large section of a society, policy proposals and programmes of action etc. This function can be performed best by political parties. The last input functions political communication is the process where by components of a political system, such as, individuals, groups and institutions, transmit and received information regarding the functioning of the political system. This function can be best performed by mass media or the organisations controlling the media of mass communication.

MODELS OF STRUCTURAL -FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

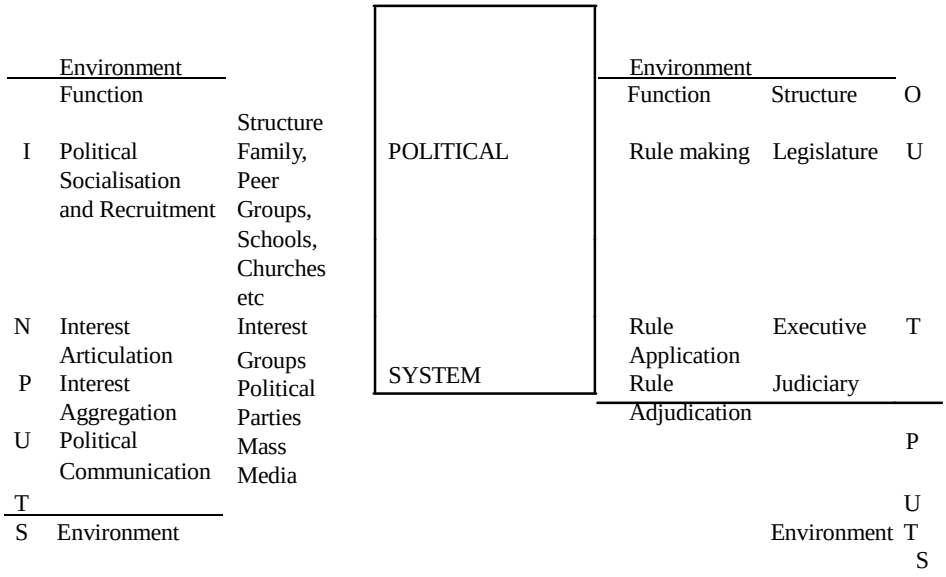

Fig. 2.2

Further, Almond and Powell have identified three chief characteristics of development of political system that is 'political development'. These are (i) structural differentiation (ii) secularisation of culture and (iii) expansion of capabilities. According to Almond a principal aspect of the development or transformation of the political system is role differentiation or structural differentiation. By differentiation they refer to the process where by roles change and become more specialised or more autonomous or where by new types of roles are established or are created. The underlying propensities of a political system, representing its psychological dimension, have been described as political culture. Secularisation of culture concern with this aspect of political system. The secularisation of culture, to Almond and Powell is the process where by traditional orientations and attitudes give way to more dynamic decision making processes involving the gathering of information, the evaluation of information, the laying out of alternative course of action, the selection of a course of action form among these possible courses, and the means where by one tests whether or not a given course of action is producing the consequences which were intended. Expansion of capabilities implies an increase in four types of capabilities of political system: (i) regulative capability (the capability of legitimate coercion to control the behaviour of individuals and groups); (ii) extractive capability (the capability to appropriate the natural and human resources of society and international environment); (iii) distributive capability (the capability to distribute various benefits to individuals and groups) ; and (iv) responsive capability (the capability to respond to the demands coming form society and international environment). A balanced development required that regulative and extractive capabilities of political system are suitably matched with its distributive and responsive capabilities.

NOTES

2.5.2 Criticism

Despite the fact that structural functional approach has occupied a very important place in the realm of comparative politics, it cannot be denied that it has some serious short comings. It has been criticised on various grounds. Firstly, the structural functional analysis tends to focus primarily static relationships rather then undynamics. The approach is concerned, above all is the problems of systemic survival, the requirements of the stable adaptation, and the operation of various functions and structures oriented towards system maintenance. Therefore this approach is accused of being anti change. This approach has the serious flow of being concerned with the present and having no perspective of the future. The functionalist defeat the very purpose of their approach by miss applying their tools of empirical investigation while studying the political systems of the third world. It failed to provide empirically validated answers to what is happening in the third world. According to Marion Levy, this approach suffers from the 'fallacy of functional teleology'. It means it suffer from the tendency to explain the origins of a condition or pattern of action in terms of its being a functional necessity for the survival of the system. It is also alleged that the structural functional approach is nothing else then an exercise to defend and justify the status quo. The real pursuit of the functionalist is to save a political system from changing towards socialism. The functionalist are accused of being the defenders of the bourgeoisie at home and of imperialism abroad. It is also further criticised that while Easton and Parsons present and elaborate scheme of their 'system' Almond talks of functions without referring to a system in which functions have a meaning that is, he is more concerned with his own sub-sets without first explaining and clarifying the premises of his main set. Moreover, what ever he says about his political system and its structural functional mechanism is applicable to a western country. According to Meehan ' it seems clear that the search for a general theory, functionalist or not, or for an all-encompassing model of politics is a false and misleading trail that leads to conceptual difficulties that are virtually insoluble'. It is also alleged that the structural functional approach is not suited to analysis of power relations in society.

However, structural functional analysis signifies a significant advance in the sphere of political analysis. It has its advantages limited to the study of selected affluent western democratic countries where alone it may look quite attractive for a comparative analysis of political systems. It may also be added in its favour that it deals for the most part with a manageable collection of variables; and it provides a set of standardised categories that can be applied successfully over widely disparate political system.

2.6 COMMUNICATION MODEL (KARL DEUTSCH)

The political communication approach is a relatively recent and fast-moving development in the field of scientific analysis. It leans heavily on the fundamental orientations of cybernetics-the science of control and communication system. It has received a great impetus from the revolutionary developments that occurred after the Second World War in the spheres of engineering and technology. Some scholars, chief among them Karl W. Deutsch have developed a new approach in the sphere of comparative politics where by the analysis of political phenomena is made on the basis of communication and control system. The main purpose of social theorist subscribing to this approach is that the developments in the new science of communications have led to a diminution in importance of the differences of analytical purposes, between the behaviour of living things and that of social organisations.

Check Your Progress

7. What was Herbert Spencer famous for?
8. How did Talcott Parsons envisage the social system?

NOTES

Karl Deutsch sees that the new sciences can now without fear of being misleading is used to State as well as other types of political systems. The term 'communication' refers to body of basic concepts underlying several contemporary approaches to human behaviour including the interactions of nation states. Used in a wider sense, the term 'communication' involves not only oral speech but all human behaviour. In an even broader sense, it may be used with reference to the ways in which the physical environment excites signals in the central nervous system-together with the ways in which the human being operates upon the physical environment. In this term the organism and the environment form a single system: the organism affects the environment and the environment affects the organism. It is for this reason, that the approach of political communications also known by the name of political cybernetics. According to this approach, politics and government 'appear in essence as processes of steering and coordinating human efforts towards the attainment of some set of goals'. In this framework, this approach refers to the basic mechanism through which these processes manifest themselves in the decision.

The study of political communication approach is integrally related to the study of political systems. It is the communication that gives dynamics to the political system. The communication approach adopted by Karl Deutsch may be set to have three main characteristics:

- It no longer has six powers as the key variable in the key explanation of the political phenomena. Power is neither the centre nor the essence of politics. Instead the essence of politics becomes the dependable coordination of human efforts and expectation for the attainment of the goals of the society.
- There is a strong emphasis on the empirical nature of the concepts. The attempt is to 'operationalise' is concept through measurement and mapping. Quantitative data is not seen as a substitute for other type of analysis but as complementary in that it could do much to check, strengthen or conform the judgement of the historian or political analyst.
- It is not restricted to any one level of analysis. It is equally relevant to groups, peoples, organisations of any size, including the state, and relationship between the units.

The political communication approach lays stress on the point that all functions of a political system 'are performed by the means of communications'. It is communication that sustain and nourishes the body of a system. Hence, one 'may liken the communication to the circulation of the blood. It is not the blood but what it contains that nourishes the system. The blood is the neutral medium carrying, claims, protests and demands through the veins of the heart; and from the heart through the arteries flow the outputs of rules, regulations and adjudications in response to the claims and demands'. Through this approach seeks to study the elements of change, it is more concerned with a change that may not bring about the destruction of the system. As such, it is concerned with ways in which certain kinds of apparatus are maintained through 'feedbacks', that is to say, devices by which the entropy of a system is counteracted by returning some of its output into input.

Karl Deutsch, the chief exponent of the communication approach describes the main theme of his model in his famous book *The Nerves of Government: Modes of Political Communication and Control* (1963). He sought to apply the concepts and methods of modern information technology as well as psychology of nervous system to an analysis of political system. As stated earlier he particularly introduced the techniques

NOTES

of cybernetics to the sphere of political analysis. Cybernetics is the study of the operation of control and communication systems; it deals both with biological systems and man made machinery. Deutsch declared that his work was concerned less with the bones or muscles of the body-politic than with its nerves-its channels of communications and decisions. Communication theory regards the function of communication as the centre of all political activity. An analysis of communication flowing from and flowing into political system would, therefore, be very helpful in the description, classification analysis and explanation of the important aspects if political life. Deutsch argued that it might be profitable to look upon government some what less as a problem of power and somewhat more as a problem of steering i.e. directing the course of its activity which is the main function of communication. He, therefore, regards political system as a 'network of communication channels'. According to him it is largely a 'self-regulating' or self-controlling' system which involves its own process and mechanism for the acquisition, collection, transmission, selection and the storage of information.

The aim of Deutsch is to use the concepts and methods of the science of cybernetics to provide explanations for not simply the survival but the growth of political systems and to predict the consequences of changes that affect the structure of systems. The main features of Deutsch communication model may be summed up as follows:

- *Society as a machine*: according to Deutsch, the social system and political system as its part survive and develop because they contain mechanisms which allowed or encourage habit forming and other activities that go with this: the acquiring of information; the selection and storage of this information; the selection and the development of norms relating to the use of information gain.
- *New definition of politics*: Deutsch's one of the important concerns is to reduce the importance of the notion of powers as a component of continuing political activity. To him, politics is concerned with the attainment of social goals. It is the sphere in which the decisions are made with respect to the whole society-decisions which are enforceable.
- *New notion of government*: According to Deutsch the function of government is to control the direction of information into or away form particular channels of communication. Thus, its main task is to steer information rather then to exercise power over the individuals. *Miniature communications system*: The infrastructure of a political system is constituted by political parities and interest groups. They are interconnected and open but they are also capable of steering themselves and with mechanism (human and institutional) that allowed them to adopt and modify their structures and behaviours.
- *Homeostatis instead of equilibrium*: Deutsch desires to furnish a model that is not static but dynamic. That is, he is not for equilibrium that indicates a statuary model of a political system. He calls the whole idea of equilibrium as being both mechanistic and excessively detached from the impact of environmental factors. Politics is a changing phenomenon and thus he stands for a dynamic situation what he terms homeostatis.
- *Concept of feedback or servomechanism*: Feedback is the key concept of the model of Deutsch. It means a network of communications that produces actions in response to an input of information and includes the results of its own action in the information by it modifies its subsequent behaviour. However, feedback may be negative or positive. A negative feedback system is one

which transmits back to it self information that is the result of decisions and actions taken by the system, and which leads the system to change its behaviour in pursuit of the goals which it has set itself. 'Load' indicates the total amount of information which a system may possess at a particular time. 'Lag' is indicates the amount of delay that the system experience between reporting the consequences of decisions and acting on the information that it has received. 'Gain' is an indication of the manner in which the system responds to the information that it has received. 'Lead' illustrates the extent to which a system has the capacity to react to predictions about the future consequences of decisions and actions.

There are some problems of communications which may be studied in three context: (i) Communication with in the political system; (ii) Communication between political system and its environment; and (iii) Communication between two or more political items. Its analysis involves the study of several components, including; (i) the structures meant for sending and receiving messages; (ii) the channels used for the purpose of communication; (iii) Process of storage of information; (iv) feedback mechanisms; (v) The code and languages applied for the purpose of communication; and (vi) the contents of message transmitted etc. Communication by no means a smooth process. One has to be very careful in detecting distortions. If the distortion could be corrected appropriately, lots of problem can be prevented or minimised.

Criticism

The political communication approach also is not free from criticisms, which can be enumerated as follows:

- Political communication approach, though different from such approach in other disciplines like neurophysiology, mathematics and electrical engineering has been criticised for elaborating and essentially engineering and mechanistic orientation towards human behaviour. One may ask as to how the law of a natural and fixed science like that of electrical engineering can be applied to the study of human behaviour that is never fixed and definite. Man is not a machine and thus society cannot be regarded as a mechanistic arrangement.
- The entire approach of political communication depends upon the extension of an analogy between a natural and a social system. A shift from the language of natural sciences to that of a social science is bound to involve significant discontinuities and incongruities. Naturally, the model of Deutsch ultimately becomes so complex that it tends to move away from being a working model and towards becoming a scheme.

  There is not only the difficulty of applying models picked up from a natural to a social science it is all the more difficult to make it useful for the purpose of social sciences. Some terms of electrical engineering may either remained unapplied or they may be misapplied and for this reason it is likely that we get a confused picture of a political model. The theory thus suffers form serious drawbacks both at the structural level and in substantive matters.
- A cybernetic model is a very general, abstract one, and its principal concepts may acquire different meanings according to the particular system to which they are applied, be it a computer, an irrigation system, the human brain and society. It

is also remarked that, despite Deutsch attempt to develop eventually a theory of politics, national and international, his own formulations where explicitly not theory but parts of an ongoing enterprise to be develop into theory at some unspecified later stage.

Though it is true that the cybernetics model loosely adopted by Karl Deutsch and others for analysing the stability and instability of political systems in the light of communication systems is not rich enough to do all that they intend to do with it, we cannot ignore the fact that the work of an innovator is always subject to criticism. Despite all points of weakness, as enumerated above it may be admitted that the approach looks promising too. In political science this approach is particularly useful for an analysis of the processes of bargaining, conflict resolution, decision making, evolution of policies, estimating the impact of publicity of propaganda as well as for understanding the dynamics of international relations.

2.7 SUMMARY

- The Rational Actors Model is influenced by the positivism and is based on rational choice theory. The crux of the model is it explains the events by taking individual as well as the state as rational actor.
- The Rational Actors Model has contributed significantly in understanding the various dynamics of the contemporary political system of the world.
- Political philosophy as a whole could be conceived as 'philosophy of public choice'. But traditional political philosophy should not be regarded as covering 'public choice theory' as a whole.
- Now 'economic theories of politics', the so-called 'new political economy' (for exemplary works see Downs (1957), Buchanan and Tullock (1962), Olson (1965), Brennan and Lomasky (1993)) and more generally speaking the application of mathematical models of choice have added many insights into the 'logic' and actual workings of public choice processes which go beyond those of traditional political philosophy.
- Along with game theory, Public Choice has been one of the two most impressive theoretical developments in modern economics of the second half of the last century.
- Since the behaviour of human individuals is always what it is, human behaviour, Public Choice insists on using the same model of behaviour throughout.
- Whether it be political or other behaviour, its explanation should be based on a *universal* explanatory model for which the 'rules of the game' are antecedent clauses while the model of individual behaviour as such must be the same across games (which of course does not rule out that some rules of a lower order game are to be explained as emergent or artificially created in a higher order game).
- System analysis has acquired a new significance after the rise of behaviouralism in American political science particularly after the Second World War.
- David Easton by his system model provided a systematic study of political science. He applied the methods of general system theory to politics. He underlined some basic assumptions through his method of analysis which includes

NOTES

Check Your Progress

9. What is the study of political communication approach related to?
10. Define cybernetics.

- This theory requires the construction of a paradigm with the highest order of generalization;
- Political system should be viewed as a whole;
- Research on political system is based on both psychological and situational data;
- Political life may be described as in disequilibrium.

- Though Easton model of the political system has been criticized for his inadequate conceptualization, his pre occupation with stability, his avoidance of human element, lack of testable hypothesis in his research, operational difficulties with in his framework and vagueness in his notion of the system's boundary, his model of political analysis has heralded a new dimension in the study of political science.
- Almond and Powell further enriched the notions of political system by emphasizing the structural and functional aspects of a political system.
- Almond elaborated further the input and output functions of a political system which include seven variables such as political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, political communication (input functions) and rule making, rule application and rule adjudication (output functions).
- Critics highlighted the drawbacks of Almond's structural functionalism as deterministic and ideological, conservative, lacking methodological clarity and anti change concept, never the less it cannot be rule out that the framework devised by Almond provides a greater understanding of comparative political philosophy.

2.8 KEY TERMS

- **Rational choice theory:** A framework for understanding and often formally modeling social and economic behavior
- **Rational choice:** A primarily normative theory and assumes that all individuals can be rational
- **Systems theory:** The trans-disciplinary study of systems in general, with the goal of elucidating principles that can be applied to all types of systems in all fields of research
- **Cybernetics:** The study of the operation of control and communication systems; it deals both with biological systems and man-made machinery

2.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The steps involved in a rational decision-making process used by a state are as follows:
   (i) Goal setting and ranking
   (ii) Consideration of options
   (iii) Assessment of consequences
   (iv) Profit maximization
2. Rational choice theory, also known as choice theory or rational action theory is a framework for understanding and often formally modeling social and economic

behavior. It is the main theoretical paradigm in the currently dominant school of microeconomics.

3. One reason for government involvement in the economy is due to the fact that markets do not always operate efficiently. When they do not, because of 'market imperfections' leading to 'market failure', then governments have to step in to correct such inefficiencies.
4. To improve economy, government interventions may take the form of corrective taxes and subsidies and/or it may take the form of regulation and directives.
5. Systems theory is the trans-disciplinary study of systems in general, with the goal of elucidating principles that can be applied to all types of systems in all fields of research.
6. An important step to introduce the *systems approach*, into (rationalist) hard sciences of the 19th century, was the energy transformation, by figures like James Joule and Sadi Carnot.
7. Herbert Spencer, a British philosopher famous for applying the theory of natural selection to society, was in many ways the first true sociological functionalist.
8. Talcott Parsons held that the social system is made up of the actions of individuals.
9. The study of political communication approach is integrally related to the study of political systems.
10. Cybernetics is the study of the operation of control and communication systems; it deals both with biological systems and man-made machinery.

2.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Mention the four salient features of RCT, as identified by Green and Shapiro (1994)?
2. Greg Cashman provided a useful set of steps in the rational model. Which are these steps?
3. List the three main characteristics of systems outlined by David Apter.
4. According to Merton, which are the five situations facing an actor?
5. Which are the main characteristics of the communication approach, adopted by Karl Deutsch?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically examine rational choice theory.
2. Write in your own words the meaning of public choice theory.
3. David Easton model of political system was a path breaking model in comparative political analysis. Discuss.
4. Give a comparative analysis of structural functionalism of Almond vis-à-vis system model of David Easton.
5. Give a summary of communication model as advocated by Karl Deustch.

NOTES

2.11 FURTHER READING

Sharma, Urmila and S.K. Sharma. 2000. *Principles and Theory of Political Science*. Atlantic Publishers.

Leopold, David and Marc Stears. 2008. *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*. Oxford University Press.

Elster, Jon. 1993. *Political Psychology*. Cambridge University Press.

Agarwal, R. C. 1991. *Political Theory: Principles of Political Science*. S. Chand Publishers.

Hoffman, John. 2007. *A Glossary of Political Theory*. Stanford University Press.

UNIT 3 CONTEMPORARY LIBERALISM

NOTES

Structure

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be acquainted with John Rawls version of the contemporary liberalism where you will learn about his theory of justice. The unit also discusses and elaborates Nozick's version of contemporary liberalism, i.e., libertarianism where you will be made familiar with the Nozick's view of justice. The unit also has a discussion on the concept of communitarianism, as developed and defined by many communitarian thinkers.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the various aspects of contemporary liberalism as enunciated by John Rawls
- Define the Rawls theory of justice
- Explain the libertarianism of Nozick and his theory of justice
- Explain the concept of communitarianism, as propounded by various communitarian thinkers, such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer, etc.

3.2 RAWLS

Contemporary liberalism owes much to the classical as well as modern liberalist thinkers such as Locke, Kant and Mill. However, if one has to single out one important political philosopher of the 20th Century whose influence has been the most profound in liberal thinking it is John Rawls. Before going into the details of the Rawls' philosophy let us have a brief look into his life profile.

NOTES

John Rawls was born in 1921 in Maryland, United States. Rawls attended school in Baltimore for a short time before transferring to Kent School, an Episcopalian preparatory school in Connecticut. Rawls studied graduation at Princeton University. After his completion of graduation in 1943, he joined the Army and participated in World War - II. After the war, he returned to Princeton to pursue a doctorate in moral philosophy. Rawls married Margaret Fox, a graduate, in 1949. He finished his Ph.D. from Princeton in 1950 and thereafter he taught there until 1952, when he received a Fulbright Fellowship to Oxford University, where he was influenced by the liberal political theorist and historian Isaiah Berlin and the legal theorist H.L.A. Hart. After returning to the United States, he served first as an assistant and then associate professor at Cornell University. In 1962, he became a full professor of philosophy at Cornell, and soon achieved a tenured position at MIT. That same year, he moved to Harvard University, where he taught for almost forty years, and where he trained some of the contemporary figures in moral and political philosophy, including Martha Nussbaum, Thomas Nagel, Onora O'Neill, Christine Korsgaard, Susan Neiman and Thomas Pogge. Rawls is noted for his contributions to liberal political Philosophy.

John Rawls is Professor Emeritus at Harvard University. He is the author of the well-known and path breaking *A Theory of Justice* and the more recent work *Political Liberalism*. His book *A Theory of Justice* provides a skeletal account of Rawls's project of using social contract theory to generate principles of justice for assigning basic rights and duties and determining the division of social benefits in a society. This book is regarded as the most important work of political philosophy written in English since the Second World War. It has influenced modern liberals and social democrats alike. Rawls proposed a theory of 'justice as fairness' that is based on the belief that social inequality can be justified only if it is of benefit to the least advantaged. This presumption in favour of equality is rooted in Rawls's belief that most people deprived of knowledge about their own talents and abilities would choose to live in an egalitarian society, rather than an inegalitarian one. As for most people, the fear of being poor will outweigh the desire to be rich, redistribution and welfare can be defended on grounds of fairness. The universalist presumptions of his early work were modified to a certain degree in his another famous work *Political Liberalism.* Two monumental treaties written by Rawls–*A Theory of Justice* (1971) and *Political Liberalism* (1993) have laid the contemporary terms of debate and discussions on liberalism and its values. Rawls revived the social contract tradition of Locke, Rousseau, and Kant, both redeployed and depend Mill's vindication of liberty in a free society, and argued against conventional judgements, especially those of utilitarianism, that treated individuals as means towards attending the collective good. A liberal state, according to Rawls, most not only guarantee that all its citizens have an equality of fundamental liberty rights, such as voting, and freedom of speech, religion and association; it must also ensure that those who are least well-off are assured as good a life as possible. He asserts that freedom should never be sacrificed on the grounds of an increase in material well- being. This is why he gives priority to the equal enjoyment of liberty (the liberty principle) over the principle that requires the welfare of the least well-off to be taken care of (the difference principle). Overall Rawls holds out an account of egalitarian liberalism that is hospitable to redistributive experiments of the liberal state.

John Rawls in his celebrated work *A Theory of Justice* has pointed out that a good society is characterised by a number of virtue. Justice is the first virtue of a good society. In other words, justice is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of a good society. A well-ordered society according to Rawls is effectively regulated by a public

conception of justice. It is a society which everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice and the basic institutions satisfy these principles. For Rawls, what is directly relevant for social ethics and justice is the individuals' means to pursue their own ends and to live whatever 'good life' they choose for themselves. These means are 'basic liberties', on the one hand, and 'primary goods', on the other.

NOTES

Rawls weaves an intricate and elaborate pattern of enquiry and provides a coherent, systematic and powerful defence of a new kind of egalitarianism that preserves and extends individual liberty. Rawls outlines the features of his conception in an article that appeared in 1957, entitled *Justice as Fairness* culminating in *A Theory of Justice*. The elaboration and clarification of theory continues through a series of book and two more books *Political Liberalism* and *The Law of People's*. According to Rawls, the problem of justice consist in ensuring a just distribution of 'primary goods' which include rights and liberties, powers and opportunities, income and wealth, means of self respect and so on. He has described his theory as the theory of pure procedural justice. It means that once certain principles of justice are unanimously accepted, the distribution resulting form their application will be necessarily just. Rawls has severely criticised those theory of allocation which ignore moral worth of the individual for the attainment of any pre determined goal. He has attacked utilitarianism because in calculating the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' it does not care if it leads to extreme hardship to any particular individual. He has brilliantly argued that you cannot compensate for the sufferings of the distressed by enhancing the joys of the prosperous. Rawls has evolved a unique methodology for arriving at a unanimous procedure of justice.

Rawls observes: the political constitution and the principal economic and social arrangements such as the legal protection of freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, competitive markets, private property in the means of production and the monogamous family must be accepted as given. Unfortunately, this system breeds deep inequalities which cannot possibly be justified by an appeal to the notions of merit or desert. It is these inequalities, presumably inevitable in the basic structure of any society, to which the principles of social justice must in the first instance apply . . . . . the justice of a social scheme depends essentially on how fundamental rights and duties are assigned and on the economic opportunities and social conditions in the various sectors of society. In this way, Rawls is interested in developing a conception of justice which can provide a standard by which the distributive arrangements of a given society can be assessed but which need not concern itself with the fundamental question of ownership of the means of production. His aim is to present a conception of justice which generalises and carries to a higher plane the familiar theory of the social contract as found in Locke, Rousseau and Kant. The guiding idea is that the principles of justice for the basic structure of society are the object of the original agreement.

Rawls has evolved a unique methodology for arriving at a unanimous procedure of justice. Following the tradition of the 'social contract', Rawls has envisaged an 'original position' by abstracting the individuals from their particular social and economic circumstances. In Rawls own words 'In Justice as fairness the original position of equality corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional theory of the social contract. This original position is not, of course, thought of as an actual historical state of affairs, much less as a primitive condition of culture. It is understood as a purely hypothetical situation characterised so as to lead to a certain conception of justice. John Rawls,

These individuals are symbolically placed behind a 'veil of ignorance' where they are supposed to be deliberating as rational agents. They are totally unaware of their

NOTES

wants, interests, skills and abilities as well as of the condition which lead to discrimination and conflict in the society. But they have an elementary knowledge of the economics and psychology, and are also endowed with a 'sense of justice'. Each individual wants to maximise his or her well being, without being envious. They are self interested but not egoists. They are not prepared to take a risk or resort to gambling. According to Rawls, in such a state of uncertainty the national negotiators will choose the least dangerous path. In other words, each individual will hypothetically place himself or her self in 'the least advantage positions' while recommending the criteria of allocation of the primary goods. Hence each of them will demand greatest benefit for the least advantaged. R.P. Wolf observes Rawls revives a version of the theory of the social contract as a way of discovering a via media between utilitarianism and intuitionism. Morally, he is more comfortable with the intuitionists but methodologically his heart is with the utilitarians and with the new-classical economists.

Rawls's basic concern might be put this way: What is the most reasonable conception of justice for a society of free and equal persons? What principles should our society meet, if it is to be fair to persons conceived of as free and equal: both conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal? In particular, should it be utilitarian, libertarian, a less liberal egalitarian society, a less egalitarian liberal society? *Theory* offers a three-part answer to this question:

- Rawls presents two principles of justice, and offers an argument for those principles according to which the members of society would choose them in an 'original position' behind a 'veil of ignorance', which hides all information about their social position and natural endowments.
- He presents a sketch of a society that operates on these principles, to show that they are realistic.
- And he argues, finally, that a just society—just by the lights of justice as fairness—would be stable in part because living in a just society and having a sense of justice guided by his principles is good for those who live in the society.

As a result of the hypothetical negotiations under such conditions, three principles of justice will be accepted by all, according to Rawls, in this order:

(i) *principal of equal liberty* (for example, equal right to most extensive liberty compatible with similar liberty of others) which postulates that nobody's liberty will be sacrificed for the sake of any other benefit (liberty in this sense implies equal right to political participation, freedom of expression, religious liberty, equality before the law etc). O.P. Gauba, An Introduction to Political Theory, Macmillan, Delhi, 2006, p-383.

(ii) The principle also implies that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty of all.

Second principle comprises of two parts:

(a) *Principle of fair equality of opportunity*, particularly for acquiring offices and positions; and

(b) *Difference principle*, which implies that any departure from equal distribution of the primary goods can be justified only when it could be proved to bring greatest benefit to the least advantaged. In other words, a special reward for extraordinary ability and effort to any individual can be treated as just only if it results in the greatest benefit to the least privileged.

(iii) When these conditions have been fulfilled, the criteria of efficiency can be justly applied in a competitive economy. In other words, the rule of allocation 'to each according to his ability' can be applied only if higher efficiency of the concerned individuals results in ameliorating the condition of the least privileged.

NOTES

Here Rawls introduces the ideas of the 'chain connection' which implies that in order to strengthen a chain we should start with strengthening its weakest link, and then repeat the process by identifying the weakest link on each occasion. The justifiability of any special concessions, subsidies or protection depends on empirical facts whether or not such benefits filter down ultimately to help the neediest.

The protections of the basic liberties are especially stringent. Rawls's equal basic liberty principle has priority over the second principle. So Rawls may seem to be endorsing a libertarian view. But his first principle is about specific liberties, not liberty or choices as such. In particular, the market liberties that were the concern of the Lochner Court are not covered by his first principle of justice. So those liberties can be regulated to achieve the aims of the second principle of justice. So what does the 'priority of liberty' come to? It means that justifications for limiting a basic liberty must show how the proposed limit improves the protection of the basic liberties overall. For example, to protect the religious liberty of religious minorities, we might restrict the scope of majority rule by adopting a constitutional right to liberty of conscience that ensures the free exercise of religion: this plausibly counts as a restriction of political liberty, as much as it limits the scope of that liberty. So one basic liberty (political liberty) is restricted to ensure another basic liberty (religious liberty). But this is the force of the priority of liberty—it is not similarly permissible to restrict political liberty in order to improve the economic conditions of the least advantaged: for example, to restrict the voting rights of the better off in order to improve the economic circumstances of the less well-off.

Second, the difference principle says that inequalities are permissible only if they maximally benefit the least advantaged. To appreciate the moral idea behind the principle, let us assume that a society guarantees equal basic liberties and fair equality of opportunity. Still, it may show considerable inequalities. In particular, suppose some people have highly marketable skills based on relatively scarce natural talents, and that others lack similarly high-end marketable skills. Assume people in both groups get up, work hard, and contribute. Nevertheless, they receive substantially different rewards in the labor market and those differences in turn have a large impact on what they aspire to, and on the extent to which they can achieve their aspirations. How, in a society dedicated to the proposition that we all are created equal, can such inequalities, founded as they are on the contingencies of natural talent, be acceptable?

The answer provided by the difference principle is that we need to mitigate these inequalities owing to differences in natural talent. More positively stated that when the difference principle is in effect, everyone and in particular the least advantaged group shares in the benefits that flow from the diversity of talents in the population. 'The difference principle represents, in effect, an agreement to regard the distribution of natural talents as in some respects a common asset and to share in the greater social and economic benefits made possible by the complementarities of this distribution . . . . The naturally advantaged are not to gain merely because they are more gifted, but only to cover the costs of training and education and for using their endowments in ways that help the less fortunate as well.'

The difference principle treats the distribution of talents as a common asset in that it seeks to ensure that the variety in our talents works to the benefit of all, and in

NOTES

particular benefit the least well-off. It does not mandate a socially beneficial use of one's talents but does say that people can legitimately expect greater economic rewards from the use of their talents and abilities only if the use benefits the least well-off. The point of the difference principle is not to rail against the differences of natural endowments, or to eliminate them. The question of political morality is what to do with such differences, given their potentially large consequences for the fate of morally equal persons. The difference principle proposes an answer. In advancing the difference principle, Rawls urges, in effect, that we reject the idea that a market economy should be a kind of talent contest, designed to discover and reward the gifted. Instead, it should work as one part of a fair scheme of cooperation, and ensure a reasonable life for all members, understood as free and equals persons: 'In justice as fairness', Rawls says, 'men agree to share one another's fate. In designing institutions they undertake to avail themselves of the accidents of nature and social circumstance only when doing so is for the common benefit'.

Third, the large ambition of justice as fairness is to effect a 'reconciliation of liberty and equality'—to bring elements of both liberal and egalitarian political thought together into a single coherent political philosophy. To see, consider how the two principles work in combination. Assume first that what matters to people is not only to have legally protected liberties, but for those liberties be valuable: for them to be worth something. Assume, second, that the value of a person's liberty is importantly determined by the resources available to that person for using the liberty. In particular, assume that the worth or value of my liberties to me is an increasing function of the resources over which I exercise control: as my command of resources increases, I can do more with my liberties.

Now put the two principles together: the first ensures equal basic liberties; the second guarantees that the minimum level of resources is maximized. If the worth of a person's liberty—its value to the person—is an increasing function of the level of her resources, then by maximizing the minimum level of resources, we also maximize the minimum worth of liberty. Thus the two principles together require that society 'maximize the worth to the least advantaged of the complete scheme of equal liberty shared by all'. Maximizing the minimum worth of liberty 'defines', Rawls says, 'the end of social justice'.

It may be argued that Rawls' theory does meet the criteria for a theory of economic justice since it does propose to regulate distributive arrangements in society by an ethical principle. This argument cannot be sustained because Rawls places a severe limit to the amount of redistribution of income allowed by his ethical norm. This limit is dictated by the market economy. His ethical principle of distributive justice prescribes that transfers of income from the rich to the poor should not reach a point at which 'greater taxes interfere so much with economic efficiency that the prospects of the least advantaged in the present generation are no longer improved but begin to decline'.

3.2.1 The Role of Justice

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many. Therefore in a just society, the liberties of equal citizenship are taken

as settled; the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests. The only thing that permits us to acquiesce in an erroneous theory is the lack of a better one; analogously, an injustice is tolerable only when it is necessary to avoid an even greater injustice. Being first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising. These propositions seem to express our intuitive conviction of the primacy of justice. No doubt they are expressed too strongly. In any event I wish to inquire whether these contentions or others similar to them are sound, and if so how they can be accounted for. To this end it is necessary to work out a theory of justice in the light of which these assertions can be interpreted and assessed.

3.2.2 The Subject of Justice

Many different kinds of things are said to be just and unjust: not only laws, institutions, and social systems, but also particular actions of many kinds, including decisions, judgments, and imputations. We also call the attitudes and dispositions of persons and persons themselves, just and unjust. Our topic, however, is that of social justice. For us the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation. By major institutions we understand the political constitution and the principal economic and social arrangements. Thus the legal protection of freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, competitive markets, private property in the means of production, and the monogamous family are examples of major social institutions. Taken together as one scheme, the major institutions define men's rights and duties and influence their life-prospects, what they can expect to be and how well they can hope to do. The basic structure is the primary subject of justice because its effects are so profound and present from the start. The intuitive notion here is that this structure contains various social positions and that men born into different positions have different expectations of life determined, in part, by the political system as well as by economic and social circumstances. In this way the institutions of society favour certain starting places over others. These are especially deep inequalities. Not only are they pervasive, but they affect men's initial chances in life; yet they cannot possibly be justified by an appeal to the notions of merit or desert. It is these inequalities, presumably inevitable in the basic structure of any society to which the principles of social justice must in the first instance apply. These principles, then, regulate the choice of a political constitution and the main elements of the economic and social system. The justice of a social scheme depends essentially on how fundamental rights and duties are assigned and on the economic opportunities and social conditions in the various sectors of society.

3.2.3 Why a social contract?

To defend his principles of justice, Rawls revives the social contract idea associated with Locke, Rousseau, and Kant. The social contract tradition argues that the right way to order a society is the ordering that the members of the society would unanimously agree to. Because of the requirement of unanimity, each person has veto power over the terms of the agreement, so the terms of the agreement must be justified to each person, who must find the basics of the society acceptable. We are to live together on terms that each of us finds acceptable. And as Hobbes said 'That which every man will have so, no man can say is unjust'.

This idea of a unanimous initial agreement on the basic terms of social cooperation has an obvious attraction for a society of equals. But at the same time, a basic fact of

NOTES

social life is that people disagree about issues of morality, politics, and religion. How could there ever be unanimous agreement? If there is to be agreement, we need to impose some special conditions on the agreement. We cannot simply take a vote that will simply reveal the points of disagreement, not generate a unanimous agreement. At the same time, not just any conditions designed to generate agreement will do. We might be able to get a unanimous agreement if we injected everyone with a drug that induces head-nodding and thus secures agreement, but that would not justify the results.

How then can we navigate between voting and drugging? One thought is that people who disagree about what justice demands nevertheless agree, or might be brought on reflection to agree, on certain fundamentals. Suppose, then, that we could use these fundamental points of agreement to define the circumstances in which people make a social contract—to set acceptable conditions on the circumstances of agreement. Then perhaps we could get unanimous agreement about basic principles of justice. So what might the points of agreement be, and how could those be expressed in the circumstances of agreement?

Rawls suggests three points of agreement:

1. That certain particular practices are unjust—e.g., religious intolerance and racial discrimination. Convictions about the injustice of these practices are, Rawls says, 'provisional fixed points which we presume any conception of justice must fit'. So the social contract condition is designed so that the parties will agree on these points, whatever else they agree on. It is simply built into the situation that the result has to fit these 'data points'.
2. By a 'conception of the person', Rawls means a view about the features of human beings that are of fundamental importance and relevance about when it comes to addressing questions of public justice. For the utilitarian, what is most fundamental is our capacity to experience pleasure and pain. For justice as fairness, what matters most when it comes to issues of justice are not the differences among us—differences of race and sex, social background, native talents, and religious, moral, and personal ideals. These differences, as important as they are in some settings, we should regard, Rawls says, as 'accidents of natural endowment and contingencies of social circumstance'; such accidents are 'arbitrary from a moral point of view'. Instead, what is relevant is that we are free and equal moral persons. This important idea can be explained as below:
   - First, individuals are assumed to have a conception of the good—a set of goals, attachments, and loyalties, which serve to guide their conduct. Conceptions of the good may be more individualistic or more communal: the essential point is that individuals have them and they vary across people.
   - Second, we have the capacity to form a conception of the good that is, a capacity to decide on, to pursue, and to revise our conception of the good. We might undertake such revision in the light on new information, wider experience, new forms of self-understanding, and moral or religious reflection. We are neither unconditionally committed to our current view of the good, nor are we simply a bundle of unrelated preferences and goals; instead we have aims and aspirations, and are able to revise them on reflection.
   - Third, we have the capacity for a sense of justice, i.e. to grasp the principles specifying fair terms of social interaction and to guide our conduct in light of that understanding.

NOTES

These common potentialities 'moral powers', in Rawls's term define us as free and equal moral persons. We are equal in that each has to a sufficient degree should have these basic powers which enable us to participate as full members of the society. This is not of course to deny our many differences; of course we are very different from one another as well. But the point is to affirm that those differences of talent and ambition, religious and gender, race and ethnicity do not touch our standing as equals; for that status, the possession of the moral powers is sufficient. Moreover, as possessors of the basic moral powers we are free. In particular, we have and are recognized as having the capacity to alter our goals, attachments, and loyalties without losing standing as citizens—for example, to undergo religious conversion or change of political commitment without loss of rights.

3. Finally, there is agreement about an abstract ideal of social cooperation—in particular, about the importance of fairness in society. While people have different ends and goals, different backgrounds and talents, we each ought to have a fair chance to develop our talents and to pursue those goals.

So here is the thought: despite disagreeing about what justice requires, we might be brought on reflection to agree, as a basis of political argument, on these basics: people who argue about what justice requires might be thought of as arguing about what are fair terms of cooperation between free and equal persons. Rawls's idea is to take these points of agreement, and construct a conception of justice around them by building the social contract to reflect them. Though we now disagree, perhaps deeply, about what a just society is, we agree or could be brought to agree on reflection with the very abstract idea that justice requires a society that is fair to its members considered as free and equal moral persons, a society whose basic structure works to 'nullify the accidents of natural endowment and contingencies of social circumstance as counters in [the] quest for political and economic advantage'. The problem is to ensure that the initial contract reflects this ideal.

3.2.4 What is the Original Position (OP)?

So the task is to connect the abstract ideal of fair cooperation among free and equal persons—each with the basic powers required for full participation in society—to specific requirements of justice. And Rawls proposes to bridge this gap through the social contract: in particular, a contract built around the points of agreement.

Rawls asks us to imagine a hypothetical situation—the Original Position—in which people are to choose principles of justice for their own society. That contract situation is constructed to reflect the fundamental points of agreement, in particular, the conception of the persons as free and equal. The essential idea is that certain of our characteristics are not relevant in deciding what we are entitled to as a matter of justice. To represent that idea of irrelevance, Rawls proposes that we make the choice of principles behind a 'veil of ignorance' in which we are assumed to be unaware of the irrelevant features. Behind the veil, we do not know, for example, whether or not we are blessed by natural chance, or whether the contingencies of social circumstance are favorable or unfavorable.

The veil of ignorance can seem like a very artificial device, and in a sense it is: how could we not know our social position, our gender, our values and religious convictions. But keep the point in mind: this is an analytical model, designed to express a moral idea, and to make our reasoning about justice more tractable. The moral idea is that certain factors are irrelevant to justice. The veil of ignorance proposes that we model irrelevance

NOTES

by ignorance. In particular, we do a thought experiment. Imagine, hypothetically, that we are to make a choice of principles of justice for our society on the assumption that we, as the parties making the choice, do not know our social class position, natural talents, sex or race, conception of the good, or anything else that distinguishes any one of us from other free and equal moral persons. Because the parties must reason as if they did not know these things, they will not be able to tailor principles to advantage themselves, or members of their class, sex, race, religion, or moral tradition. Not knowing these facts, people have a chance of arriving at a unanimous agreement. Though conditions like the veil of ignorance may seem artificial, the idea is simply 'to make vivid to ourselves that it seems reasonable to impose on arguments for principles of justice, and therefore on those principles themselves'.

Rawls proposes that people reason about issues of justice as though they were unaware of the social contingencies and the accidents of natural endowment, then they would chose his two principles of justice—with their assurance of maximum worth of liberty—over alternative conceptions. Because the aim of the original position is not simply to reach an agreement (we can get that with a head-nodding drug), but to find principles suited to the ideal of fair cooperation among free and equal persons, we are to place behind the veil of ignorance all the features that distinguish among free and equal moral persons—including their religious ideas, moral philosophies, and views of social justice. These ideas are very important to us: who we are, and how we conduct our lives. But they distinguish people, understood as free and equal citizens, so we put them aside. The parties in the original position know only that they represent the interests of a person who has some conception of the good, perhaps a religious outlook (though they do not now what that conception is); a person who has an interest in be able to choose and revise their ends; and who has an interest in forming and acting on a sense of justice.

Once they know that, however, they also know that advancing those basic interests requires certain goods 'social primary goods' and so the parties to the social contract know that they need these goods. In particular, the social primary goods are:

(i) The basic liberties, including freedom of thought and conscience, the political liberties, liberty of association, the liberties associated with the integrity of the person, and the liberties associated with the rule of law.

(ii) Freedom of movement and choice of occupation, under conditions in which there are a variety of opportunities.

(iii) Powers and prerogatives of office and positions of responsibility.

(iv) Income and wealth.

(v) Social bases of self-respect.

What is special about these goods? Given the conditions of social cooperation among human beings, free and equal citizens need these goods whatever their particular conception of the good may be. They need them because these goods are required for pursuing a wide range of ends, and for developing and exercising the potentialities or basic 'moral powers' that define a moral person. Of course, we need other goods as well, but these social primary goods are more directly dependent on social institutions than are other primary goods ('health and vigor, intelligence and imagination'). For example, consider the basic liberties. Liberty of thought and conscience is a primary good in part because it is required for the pursuit of the various moral, religious, and philosophical conceptions that serve to support our conceptions of the good: in particular, it is required

if we are to fulfill the obligations that our moral and religious views (if we have them) assign to us. Or in the case of income and wealth: we typically need resources to pursue our aims and ambitions. The case of self-respect is especially important, and I will come back to it later on.

NOTES

3.2.5 What is the Intuitive Idea Behind the OP Argument?

Under the veil of ignorance, the parties base their choice of principles on the consequences of those choices for their level of primary goods. The central claim, then, is that parties in the original position would prefer their expected level of primary goods under the two principles than under any of the alternatives, and therefore would choose those principles.

The argument itself is complicated, so it will help to have the intuitive line of thought in mind: You are asked to choose principles that will regulate the society you live in, and you understand that you will not be able to change your mind after the fact. You will make the choice under conditions of ignorance about yourself, your ideals, and your social position. Because you do not know which person you will be, but have to live with the principles you choose, you want to be sure—if this is possible—that your situation is (roughly) acceptable whatever it turns out to be. Because of the veil of ignorance—remember, it models moral equality as ignorance of who you are—you want to be sure that the society is acceptable from the point of view of each person, because you may be that person. In particular, you want to be sure that it will be acceptable even if you land in the lowest social position, where it is least likely to be acceptable. And, according to Rawls, this is just the insurance—the strong downside protection— that the two principles provide: they ensure that social arrangements are acceptable to all members of a society of equals.

But why focus so much on downside protection? To see the force of the question, consider the contrast between Rawls' two principles and the principle of average utility. According to the principle of average utility, an action or institution is right or ought to obtain just in case it maximizes the sum of utility divided by the number of people, rather than just the sum of utility (with evident differences for questions of population policy).

A society regulated by either justice as fairness with its two principles or by the principle of average utility would include a range of different levels of primary goods, associated with different social positions. Let's focus for a moment only on the economic implications of the principles. Thus, the minimum income under the two principles is a maximized minimum; it must be at least as high as the minimum level in a society that aims not to maximize the minimum but to maximize average utility (assuming that utility is increasing in income). But because the average under AU is a maximized average, it must be at least as high as the average under the two principles; moreover, the maximum level may well be higher. That is, the average level of utility may well be greater if a society permits greater dispersion of circumstances and allows inequalities that do not contribute to the well-being of the least well-off group.

Here, then, is the question: suppose you are reasoning from behind the VI: you do not know where you will end up, but you do know that there are a range of possibilities. Is it rational to take a chance with maximizing the average—with focusing on the central tendency—knowing that the worst situation will almost certainly be less good, or to opt for the two principles? Notice two considerations that are important to the decision, and they work in different directions. If you opt for justice as fairness, you buy strong protection against downside risks: in effect you buy insurance against luck, or inheritance, or talent not working out well, since you ensure that the minimum is as high as possible.

NOTES

But insurance has a cost: if things work out well, you may end up doing less well than you might otherwise have done—you pay the premium but do not collect. How then are parties in the OP to balance the high security level provided by the two principles against the possible gains that could be won by choosing average utility?

A central trait of Rawls' liberalism is its political view that citizens are entitled to live in accordance with their own freely chosen values or ends. Individuals are entitled to their own conceptions of what constitutes a good life. A conception of the good is supposed to be internally determined by the individual and not imposed from the outside by the larger society of the state. The state is required to be neutral among the many conceptions of good that individual choose. Neither can the state nor the larger society pass judgements on how to lead a good life, which religion one must adopt, or the values one must live by. A primary ambition of Rawls' work is to free the idea of what is right and just from the idea of what is good or advantageous for an individual and in giving primacy to the former over the latter–the priority of the right over the good. This allows Rawls to depart from the utilitarian tradition by insisting, as he rightly does, that the Utilitarian conceptions of good–say, the greatest good of the greatest number–overrides both the moral separateness of persons and their self- determining capacities.

Criticism

As mentioned above, Rawls liberal-egalitarian conceptions of social justice occupies a central position with in contemporary political philosophy. But it is not an unchallenged or unopposed conception. Macpherson points out that Rawls's ethical distributive principle does not prevail over, but is overridden by the capitalist market relations of production. And indeed this is the only position consistent with his fundamental Hobbesian assumption of unsocial maximising individuals as the irreducible units of modern society. According to Thomas Nagel, the controversial elements of Rawls theory of justice are its egalitarianism, its anti-perfectionism and anti-meritocracy, the primacy it gives to liberty and the fact that is more egalitarian about liberty than about other goods. The controversy regarding his monumental work on the theme of justice has taken many forms. Some have argued that the particular version of Liberalism that is it is wrong in believing that Rawls projects are egalitarian or not egalitarian enough. Some have claimed that it shows little concern for the classical notions, like merit or entitlement, guilt, innocence or retribution connected with the concept of justice. Some liberal critics find fault with his contractarian approach to justice from their utilitarian or intuitionist points of view. Others, who think that all forms of liberalism are inadequate, would now have the task of attacking and refuting a powerful theoretical defence of it. Many political philosophers have criticised it and have advanced alternative conceptions of justice. Some of these criticisms and alternatives are indicated below.

Libertarian critiques: Libertarians argue that Rawls has sacrificed liberty for the sake of equality. Why should we force for the meritorious and industrious to work for the benefit of the most disadvantaged sections? Moreover, enterprising persons must take risks for their advancement in life. Rawls negotiators are not prepared to take risk. How would they help in social progress? Robert Nozick who was his colleague has also criticised him. Robert Nozick, in his book *Anarchy State and Utopia* (1974) draws a distinction between 'end state' and 'patterning' conceptions of justice on the one hand and 'historical' and entitlement based conception of justice on the other. The former types of justice call for social reconstruction or patterning by the state in the name of some end stage goal. Rawls conception of justice is, according to Nozick, such an end state and patterning conception, which by undermining the liberty rights of the individuals

is unfair or unjust to them. Instead of prescribing ant end - state or patterning principals of distributions, Nozick looks for justice or injustice in the history of the acquisitions of the titles to our property holdings.

NOTES

Collectivist critiques: Collectivists argue that he has discovered the ground for the justification of the existing capitalist system. He has shown that if the rich have the freedom to accumulate wealth, the poor would be automatically benefited. Even if his principle of fair equality of opportunity is strictly enforced, the existing disparities between the rich and the poor will not be substantially reduced. A slight improvement in the condition of the most disadvantaged sections will be treated as an excuse to permit vast socio- economic in equalities.

Marxist critique: Marxists contained that Rawls has tried to determine the principles of justice in a hypothetical condition where people deliberate behind a 'veil of ignorance'. Any deliberations without the knowledge of prevailing social and economic conditions are meaningless. Moral system should always be analysed on the light of the class relations and the patterns of ownership of private property. They criticised liberal egalitarians for their preoccupations with just or fair distribution within the capitalist system and their failure to address its underlying or inherent exploitative or alienating inequalities between the capitalist and the workers. The ideal communist society, which Marxism seeks to bring about through the destruction of the system of private ownership of the means of production, is envisaged as a society in which their will be no scarcity, no limits to human benevolence and no state. Since the scarcity of social primary goods and the limited nature of human benevolence are the 'circumstances of justice' for Rawls's theory, their (presumed) absence in the communist society makes any principles of fair or just distributions irrelevant to such a society. Instead of any such judicial, super structural distributive principle, the higher form of community envisaged by communism will function according to the principle: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need'. In the socialist phase, which precedes and gives birth to the higher and final communist phase, a work- based or contribution- based principle of distribution will prevail.

Communitarians critique: Communitarians point out that Rawls's political philosophy does not grade any conception of good life as superior or inferior to others. This ethical neutrality evades the opportunity of the pursuit if the common good. The communitarian theorists criticise Rawls' liberal-egalitarian conception of justice for its emphasis on individual right at the expense of the good of the community. In his book, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982), Michael Sandel, of Harvard University criticises what he calls Rawls's nation of disembodied or unencumbered self or subject, in opposition to which he advances the notion of the situated self, i.e. the self or subject, who is invariably a member of the community. While, for Rawls, the right is to prior to the good and justice is the first virtue of a society, for Sandel, justice is only a remedial virtue that is needed in an individualistic society. For Sandel, moreover, the common good of the community is prior to the rights of the individuals. Charles Taylor, who too is a leading communitarian political philosopher, bemoans liberalism's 'atomistic' conception of the self. According to him, the well-being of the individual depend on the good of his community and therefore, the recognition and protection of the group or cultural rights of the community is not less important than the just distribution of the freedom and equality rights to the individuals.

These diverse critiques seem to be based on biased interpretations of Rawls's theory of justice. In facts Rawls has tried to combine different value systems in order to

NOTES

arrive at his theory of justice. Some tenets of these value- systems are thought to be incompatible with each other. Any attempt to combine them must yield a complex model. This applies to the present case also. Rawls theory of justice represents a convergence of libertarianism, egalitarianism and communitarianism.

Whatever may be the criticism the importance of the Rawls theory of justice lies in its complex representation of a convergence of libertarianism, egalitarianism and communitarianism.

Firstly, Rawls is libertarian because his conception of man negotiating in the 'original position' envisages those who are trying to maximise their self- interest. This conforms to libertarian point of view. Secondly, his first principle of justice accords priority to which cannot be compromised for any other benefits.

Rawls is egalitarian because he conceded 'equal' liberty for all. Further he insists that social economic inequalities can be allowed only if they satisfy the condition of fair equality of opportunity for all. In other words, he accepts equality as a cardinal principle, and insists that only inequalities shall be required to be justified. Again, he rules that any reward for merit and effort must satisfy the condition that it yields greatest benefit to the least advantaged. The question arises why should the meritorious accommodate the interest of the least advantaged. Here Rawls invokes the principle of the 'chain connection' operating between different individuals. More meritorious enjoy the benefits of their merit in association with the less meritorious lot. A chain is no stronger then its weakest link. Rawls shows that society can be strengthen by strengthening its weakest parts successively. The idea of 'chain connection' brings Rawls very close to the image of a communitarian.

A classic in political theory emerges by transcending the local and focuses on the universal and perennial. Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* is a masterpiece because it contains this intrinsic quality. It transcends the theoretical as well as the practical application of capitalism and socialism and identified freedom, equity, efficiency and stability as common criteria of the well-ordered constitutional democratic society.

3.3 ROBERT NOZICK

Robert Nozick (November 16, 1938–January 23, 2002) was an American political philosopher, most prominent in the 1970s and 1980s. He was a professor at Harvard University. Robert Nozick (1938–2002), an US academic and political philosopher is one of the principal advocates of libertarianism, which is the one of the contemporary version of liberalism. Nozick was born in Brooklyn, the son of a Jewish entrepreneur from the Russian shtetl whose name was Cohen. Nozick was married to the poet Gjertrud Schnackenberg. He died in 2002 after a prolonged struggle with cancer. Nozick was educated at Columbia where he studied with Sidney Morgenbesser, did his Ph.D. at Princeton and studied at Oxford as a Fulbright Scholar.

Robert Nozick's major work includes: *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974), *Philosophical Explanations* (1981), *The Examined Life* (1989), *The Nature of Rationality* (1993/1995), *Socratic Puzzles* (1997), *Invariances: The Structure of the Objective World*. His other work involved decision theory and epistemology. He is best known for his book *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974), a libertarian answer to John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971). It is widely seen as one of the most important contemporary works of political philosophy, and it has had a profound influence upon New Right theories and beliefs.

Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974), which received a National Book Award, argues among other things that a distribution of goods is just if brought about by free exchange among consenting adults and from a just starting position, even if large inequalities subsequently emerge from the process. Nozick appealed to the Kantian idea that people should be treated as ends (what he termed 'separateness of persons'), not merely as a means to some other end. Nozick here challenges the partial conclusion of John Rawls's Second Principle of Justice of his *A Theory of Justice*, that 'social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are to be of greatest benefit to the least-advantaged members of society'. *Anarchy, State and Utopia* claims a heritage from John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* and tries to base itself upon a natural law doctrine. Locke only relied on natural law as God-given to counteract the King of England's claim to divine right and thus claim to all the property of England. Nozick suggested, again as a critique of utilitarianism, that the sacrosanctity of life made property rights non-negotiable. This principle has served as a foundation for many libertarian pitches into modern politics. Most controversially, Nozick argued that a consistent upholding of the libertarian non-aggression principle would allow and regard as valid consensual/non-coercive enslavement contracts between adults. He rejected the notion of inalienable rights advanced by most other libertarian academics, writing in *Anarchy, State and Utopia* that the typical notion of a 'free system' would allow adults to voluntarily enter into non-coercive slave contracts.

In *Philosophical Explanations* (1981), which received the Phi Beta Kappa Society's Ralph Waldo Emerson Award, Nozick provided novel accounts of knowledge, free will, personal identity, the nature of value, and the meaning of life. He also put forward an epistemological system which attempted to deal with both the Gettier problem and those posed by skepticism. This highly influential argument eschewed justification as a necessary requirement for knowledge.

Nozick's Four Conditions for S's knowing that P were:

1. P is true
2. S believes that P
3. If it were the case that (not-P), S would not believe that P
4. If it were the case that P, S would believe that P

Nozick's third and fourth conditions are counterfactuals. Nozick calls his theory the 'tracking theory' of knowledge. Nozick believes that the counterfactual conditionals bring out an important aspect of our intuitive grasp of knowledge: For any given fact, the believer's method must reliably track the truth despite varying relevant conditions. In this way, Nozick's theory is similar to reliabilism. Due to certain counterexamples that could otherwise be raised against these counterfactual conditions, Nozick specified that:

(a) If P weren't the case and S were to use M to arrive at a belief whether or not P, then S wouldn't believe, via M, that P.

(b) If P were the case and S were to use M to arrive at a belief whether or not P, then S would believe, via M, that P.

Where M stands for the method by which S came to arrive at a belief whether or not P.

The Examined Life (1989), pitched to a broader public, explores love, death, faith, reality, and the meaning of life. The Nature of Rationality (1993) presents a theory of practical reason that attempts to embellish notoriously spartan classical decision theory.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

1. What is the basic provision of John Rawls' book, A Theory of Justice?
2. What does the principle of equal liberty postulate?

Socratic Puzzles (1997) is a collection of papers that range in topic from Ayn Rand and Austrian economics to animal rights, while his last production, Invariances (2001), applies insights from physics and biology to questions of objectivity in such areas as the nature of necessity and moral value.

NOTES

He developed a form of libertarianism that was close to Locke's and clearly influenced by nineteenth-century US individualists such as Spooner and Tucker. He argued that property rights should be strictly upheld, provided that wealth has been justly acquired in the first place or has been justly transferred from one person to this position means support for minimal government and minimal taxation and undermines the case for welfare and redistribution. Nozick's rights-based theory of justice was developed in response to the ideas of John Rawls.

Libertarianism treats liberty of the individual as its central concern. But it focuses on formal liberty and insists on minimal role of the state in economic activities of individuals. It regards the right to property as an important ingredient of individual liberty. It is largely opposed to the idea of welfare state. This perspective is chiefly represented by Nozick's theory of justice. Libertarianism differs from other right-wing theories in its claim that redistributive taxation is inherently wrong, a violation of peoples' rights. People have right to dispose freely of their goods and services, and they have this right whether or not it is the best way to ensure productivity. Put another way, government has no right to interfere in the market, even in order to increase efficiency. As Robert Nozick puts it, 'Individuals have rights, and there are things which no person or group may do to them (without violating their rights). So strong and far-reaching are these rights that they raise the question of what, if anything, the state and its officials may do'. Because people have a right to dispose of their holdings as they see fit, government interference is equivalent to forced labour–a violation, not of efficiency, but of our basic moral rights.

A libertarian is critical of liberal idea of justice - utilitarian and contractual and bases his conception of justice on the ideal of liberty. Nozick's entitlement theory of justice provides a powerful philosophical defence of the libertarian position of the minimal state. The entitlement theory is proposed as a critique and an alternate model to Rawls theory. It is purely a procedural theory of distributive justice which defends whatever arises from a just situation by just steps is itself just.

In his book *Anarchy State and Utopia,* Nozick sought to advance an alternative to Rawls theory of justice. While Rawls sought to moderate his libertarianism by a modicum of egalitarianism and communitarianism, Nozick stuck to libertarianism in its pure form. Rawls may be termed as left liberal or egalitarian liberal advocating a substantially redistributive welfare state. But Nozick can be termed as right liberal or libertarian who is the ardent advocate of a laissez-faire 'night watchman' state. Nozick writes, 'our main conclusions about the state are that a minimal state, limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts and so on, is justified: that any more extensive state will violate a person's rights not to be forced to do certain things, and is unjustified; and that the minimal state is inspiring as well as right'.

Robert Nozick's version of libertarian theory of justice has three aspects: (i) principle of justice in original justification or acquisition; (ii) In transfer; (iii) of rectification of unjust holdings. The first principle sets the conditions for creation of property. The second of its passage from one owner to another and the third for remedies in case any of the other two are violated. Various aspects of Robert Nozick's theory need more elaboration which is as follows:

NOTES

(i) *Modes of acquisition*: Nozick has criticised John Rawls approach which seeks to determine the principle of distribution of certain goods as if they have come to us as a gift from heaven. Nozick has adopted a realistic approach which stood account for the different modes of acquisition of goods and entitlement of different individuals to own those goods. According to Nozick, there are three sources through which individual acquired various goods, such as

(a) Through their selves i.e. through their bodies, brain cells etc. Nozick points out individuals have absolute right over them. An individual is free to use his limbs and brain to do whatever he likes;

(b) Through the natural world i.e. through land, water, resources, minerals etc. They may acquire bits of the natural world through several methods and may become entitled to their use as they like. This is precisely the area where principles of entitlement are required to be determined according to logic;

(c) Through applying themselves to the natural world i.e. to the agricultural and industrial products etc. An individual's entitlement to these products may not be questioned. Voluntary transfer of these goods will establish others entitlement to them.

(ii) *Principle of Entitlement*: Nozick's entitlement theory regards social distribution of goods as just it is generated by processes that are just, succinctly summed up as 'from each as they chose, to each as they are chosen'. People's entitlement to self ownership of their body and mind–their physical and mental faculty is obvious which needs no further justification. Their entitlement to bits of the natural world and the products of their labour should be based on the principles of justice. More precisely, there are three main principles of Nozick's 'entitlement theory':

(a) A principle of just initial acquisition–an account of how people come initially to own the things which can be transferred in accordance with,

(b) A principle of transfer–whatever is justly acquired can be freely transferred

(c) A principle of rectification of injustice–how to deal with holdings if they were unjustly acquired or transferred

(iii) Initial acquisition: it is the method where by an individual comes to appropriate some previously unwound bits of the natural world. Those who come to settle in an uninhabited continent may legitimately acquire its land and natural resources on first come first served basis, as long as no body is made worse off by their doing so. This means that this mode of acquisitions should not result in creating scarcity for others–a condition which may scarcely be satisfied. This is similar to the condition spelled out in John Locke's *Second Treaties of Government* (1690) in the case of similar acquisitions, viz. as long as enough and as good is left for others. The historical answer is often that natural resources came to be someone's property by force. According to Nozick, the use of force makes acquisition illegitimate, so current title is illegitimate. Hence those who currently possess scarce resources have no right to deprive others of access to them–e.g. capitalists are not entitled to deprive workers of access to the products or profits of the existing means of production.

(iv) voluntary transfer: This principle applies to all property whether acquired through initial acquisition or by mixing one's labour with the natural world, i.e. by means of ones talents, efforts, enterprise etc in a market situation. In other words, if I use

NOTES

others' labour and pay them as per market rates. I become owner of the product of their labour. This must be based on voluntary contract, without force of fraud. In all such transactions, an individual shall be treated as 'end-in-itself', and not as a means to others' ends. This is similar to the moral principle enunciated by Emanuel Kant, a German philosopher. Hence a contract through which an individual sells himself or any other individual to slavery will be void.

(v) *rectification*: this principles is related to the idea where the state or the international community will be justified to intervene in order to restore justice. Nozick concedes that the history of the world abounds with voluntary transfers as well as unjust acquisitions of natural resources. As long as economic disparities result from voluntary transfers, Nozick is not bothered. But if some country has gained control over rare natural resources depriving others of their legitimate share, Nozick would step into register his protest. If the inventor of the cure of a dreaded disease like cancer demand exorbitant charges from his patients, there is nothing wrong in this deal for Nozick, because he does not make any body worse off by treating his patients. But if there is a single source of water which is needed by all human beings, nobody has the right to take it into his control.

The conclusion of Nozick's entitlement theory is that 'a minimal state, limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts, and so on, is justified; any more extensive state will violate persons' rights not to be forced to do certain things, and is unjustified. Hence there is no public education, no public health care transportation, roads, or parks. All of these involve the coercive taxation of some people against their will, violating the principle 'from each as they choose, to each as they are chosen.

Rawls and Nozick differ, however, on the question of which rights are most important in treating people as ends in themselves. To oversimplify, we can say that for Rawls, one of the most important rights is to have a right to a certain share of society's resources. For Nozick, on the other hand, the most important rights are rights over oneself–the rights which constitute 'self-ownership'. In his book *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Nozick writes in the first sentence that individuals have rights, and there are things which no individual or group can do to them (without violating these rights) which can be termed as the heart of his theory. He further say society must respect these rights because they 'reflect the underlying Kantian principle that individuals are ends and not merely means; they may not be sacrificed or used for the achieving of other ends without their consent.

Criticism

Nozick's theory of justice is also not free from limitations and has been subjected to severe criticism. Many critics argue that Nozick is mistaken in believing that self-ownership necessarily yields absolute property sights. Self-ownership may be compatible with various regimes of property-ownership, including a Rawlsian one. Critics also argue that the principle of self-ownership is an inadequate account of treating people as equals, even on Nozick's own view of what is important in our lives. Nozick claims to discover the principles of justice for all human beings, but this bias is white clear. He was a staunch supporter of a competitive market society which favours the rich and the resourceful and lets the weak go to wall. He absolves the rich of all social responsibility, not to speak of social indebtedness. In a very large part of the contemporary world, justice is thought to be 'voice of the oppressed'. But Nozick wants to maintain the prevailing operation in

the name of justice! Even his principle of rectification is designed to legitimate the huge riches of the manipulators, and hit at the only assets of oil producing countries because oil is needed world over and its resources are confined to a small region. It is also criticised that Nozick invokes moral principles to demolish a redistributive, welfare state. He approves of taxation only for the provision of common services, life streets and street lights, police and defence etc. When a part of taxes imposed on the rich is spend on welfare of the poor, Nozick would term it immoral, as it is akin to 'forced labour'. In Nozick's view, it involves using abilities and efforts of one section as means to other ends; it involves unvoluntary transfer and, therefore, violates the moral principle. The lucky should have freedom to help the unlucky, if they show like! Nozick makes welfare of the poor dependent on charity, not on justice. He is not prepared to concede that the operation of competitive markets society may itself create certain conditions of injustice.

NOTES

3.4 COMMUNITARIANISM

The terms community stands for a form of society whose members are informed by the 'community spirit' or 'a sense of community'. It denotes a 'network of relationships' which are characterised by intimacy and durability. It may be distinguished from 'association' which is based on impersonal and contractual relations. Liberal theory equates society with 'association', whereas communitarian theory equates society with 'community' to determine the nature and extent of social obligation. Communitarians argue that an individual cannot assure full development of his personality unless he is committed to the spirit of community toward his fellow-beings.

Communitarianism is the belief that the self or person is constituted through the community, in the sense that individuals are shaped by the communities to which they belong and thus owe them a debt of respect and consideration; there are no 'unencumbered selves'. Although it is clearly at odds with liberal individualism, communitarianism has a variety of political forms. Left-wing communitarianism holds that community demands unrestricted freedom and social equality (the view of anarchism). Centrist communitarianism holds that community is grounded in an acknowledgement of reciprocal rights and responsibilities (the perspective of Tory paternalism and social democracy), Rightwing communitarianism holds that community requires respect for authority and established values (the view of the New Right). Communitarianism is a contemporary philosophy. It marks a departure from the philosophy of liberalism because it places the relation between individual and society in a new perspective. The communitrianism repudiates the picture of the 'self-implied in the liberal theory. Liberal theory implied an 'unencumbered detached from pre-existing social form, as exemplified by the concept of 'possessive individualism' which postulates that individual is the sole proprietor of his own person or capacities for he owes nothing to society. Such a view denies his commitment to other individuals, traditions, practices and conception of the good. It holds that self is prior to its ends. It is fully competent to choose its ends as well as its roles and dispositions. In contrast to this 'atomistic' view of individual, communitarianism advances the concept of situated self, as constituted by social role, practices and situations, in other words, communitarianism holds that an agent's identity is constituted by specific commitments to his social situations. While liberalism insists on 'liberty' of individual his interest and rights, communitarianism focuses on his social identity and upholds acceptance of 'authority' because it expresses our common will or reflects our common identity, our shared values and believes. It is significant to note that

Check Your Progress

3. Who was Robert Nozick?
4. Name some of Robert Nozick's major works.

liberalism had one liberty of the individual but atomistic view of society held by liberalism let to the erosion of the sense of responsibility and the moral standards attached thereto. Communitarianism seeks to restore that sense of responsibility and reconstruct moral standards on that basis.

NOTES

A major critique of contemporary Anglo-American liberalism certainly the critique that resonates most in East Asia has been termed 'communitarianism'. The basic themes of the communitarian critique have a long history, but modern day communitarianism began in the upper reaches of Anglo-American academia in the form of a critical reaction to John Rawls' landmark 1971 book A Theory of Justice. Drawing primarily upon the insights of Aristotle and Hegel, political philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer disputed Rawls' assumption that the principal task of government is to secure and distribute fairly the liberties and economic resources individuals need to lead freely chosen lives. These critics of liberal theory never did identify themselves with the 'communitarian movement' (the 'communitarian' label was pinned on them by others, usually critics), much less offer a grand communitarian theory as a systematic alternative to liberalism. Nonetheless, certain core arguments meant to contrast with liberalism's devaluation of community recur in the works of the four theorists named above, and for purposes of clarity one can distinguish between claims of three sorts: 'ontological' or 'metaphysical' claims about the social nature of the self, methodological claims about the importance of tradition and social context for moral and political reasoning, and normative claims about the value of community. Each strand of the debate has largely evolved from fairly abstract philosophical disputes to more concrete political concerns that may have motivated much of the communitarian critique in the first place.

Communitarian accounts of the ontology of the self were rejected by early liberal critics as internally contradictory, but they are now widely accepted as essential to most forms of liberalism. Retrospectively, this communitarian-liberal 'merger' makes sense, because close textual analysis shows that every argument made by the major communitarian philosophers was, in fact, political—not metaphysical. To wit, all of the communitarians' arguments led to the conclusion that communitarianism would provide a firmer political grounding for the liberal ideal of equal individual freedom than was offered by individualist ontologies. *The Politics of Communitarianism and the Emptiness of Liberalism* traces this political mode of philosophizing to the British New Left that shaped Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor; and to the threat to Rawlsian liberalism represented by Robert Nozick, against whom both Michael Sandel (Taylor's student) and Michael Walzer were arguing.

Communitarianism points to the shortcomings of liberalism and attempts to redefine the relation between individual and the community. Liberalism promotes individualism to focus on individual freedom which undermines individual's affinity with the community.

Liberals base their theories on notions of individual rights and personal freedom, but neglect the extent to which individual freedom and wellbeing are only possible within community. Once we recognize the dependence of human beings on society, then our obligations to sustain the common good of society are as weighty as our rights to individual liberty. Hence, communitarians argue, the liberal 'politics of rights' should be abandoned or, or at least supplemented by, a 'politics of the common good'. When every individual turns to seek his own good, no one is emotionally attached to any one. An individual would manage to have many means of comfort at the expense of his emotional security. In other words, if an individual devotes himself to the pursuit of self-interest, he cannot secure good life in the fullest sense of the term. Communitarians hold that only community

is capable of realising the common good. Individual can derive their respective goods from the source if all the individuals for their efforts for the attainment of the common good from which they would be able to derive their individual goods. This view necessitates individual's first commitment to the community and not to himself. For communitarians, individual's own existence and personality are the product of his social situation, roles and conventions which are embedded in society. While liberals leave the individual to pursue his self-appointed goals, communitarians want him to pursue the community–determine goals. While liberals declare the individual to be the sole proprietor of all his faculties, communitarians focus on his indebtedness to society for these faculties. While liberals insist on individual's rights and liberties, communitarians emphasise his duties and obligations. Communitarianism insists on our common identity and eulogizes those values and believes which are dear to all of us.

NOTES

Broadly speaking, communitarians have attacked the liberal mode of thought on the ground that it is too focused on the importance of individual liberty, and insufficiently appreciative of the way in which human beings require a place in a well functioning community in order to flourish.

Liberals believe that each person should define and seek his own 'good' with in a political structure which defines and enforces what is 'right'. On the other hand, communitarians hold that a political structure has an important role to define what is 'right' as well as 'good' and to help the citizens to seek the good. Liberals define 'common good' as a sum total of the good of all individuals which is exemplified by the reconciliation of their conflicting interests. On the contrary, communitarians define the 'common good' as a uniform entity where the good of all individual would converge. They believe that government should strive to create a well- functioning society which would enable all citizens to achieve a good life by participating in its functioning. However, like liberals, communitarians also subscribe to democratic form of government.

The ideas of communitarianism can be traced back to the thought of Aristotle, Jean Jacqeues Rousseau, G. W. F. Hegel and T.H. Green etc. However, it's most ardent advocates of contemporary communitarian theory are Michel Sandel, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michel Walzer, Charles Taylor and Will Kimlicka. These contemporary thinkers were deeply inspired by the thought of Aristotle, Hegel and Rousseau. Here, it would be pertinent to discuss in brief the contribution of Green to the communitarianism. Green is the fore runner of communitarianism. In his celebrated work *Lectures on The Principles of Political Obligation* published in 1982 he argued that human beings, as self-conscious creatures, attain the knowledge of the common good in association with the members of their community. According to him men knew the common good more intimately then their self- interest or individual good. The common good not only comprehends the good of all member of the community, but their conception of the common good is also identical. The state and politics come into existence for the realisation of the common good. The idea of the common good is the foundation of political obligation. Green asserts that the state is authorised to make only those laws which, promote the common good; and the individual is obliged to abide by only those laws which conform to the common good. If an individual thinks that he can protect the common good more effectively by opposing a particular order of the state, his political obligation odes not stop him from going a head. It is the consciousness of the common good which induces people to accept their duties. They are prepared to fore go their personal choice and self–interest for the sake of realising the common good. They are convinced that they can attain self- realisation only by pursuing the common good.

NOTES

The emphasis on community can be found in Marxism as well, and is of course a defining feature of the communist idea. However, the kind of communitarianism which has recently come to prominence with the writing of Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer, Alasdair MacIntyre, Daniel A. Bell and Charles Taylor is quite different from traditional Marxism. Marxists see community as something that can only be achieved by a revolutionary change in society, by the overthrow of capitalism and the building of a socialist society. The new communitarians, on the other hand, believe that community already exists, in the form of common social practices, cultural traditions, and shared social understandings. Community does not need to be built *de novo*, but rather needs to be respected and protected. To some extent, communitarians see community in the very social practices that Marxists see as exploitative and alienating.

Communitarians have sought to deflate the universal pretensions of liberal theory. The main target has been Rawls description of the original position as an 'Archimedean point' from which the structure of a social system can be appraised, a position whose special virtue is that it allows us to regard the human condition 'from the perspective of eternity' from all social and temporal points of view. Whereas Rawls seemed to present his theory of justice as universally true, communitarians argued that the standards of justice must be found in forms of life and traditions of particular societies and hence can vary from context to context. Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor argued that moral and political judgment will depend on the language of reasons and the interpretive framework within which agents view their world, hence that it makes no sense to begin the political enterprise by abstracting from the interpretive dimensions of human beliefs, practices, and institutions. Michael Walzer developed the additional argument that effective social criticism must derive from and resonate with the habits and traditions of actual people living in specific times and places. Even if there is nothing problematic about a formal procedure of universalizability meant to yield a determinate set of human goods and values, 'any such set would have to be considered in terms so abstract that they would be of little use in thinking about particular distributions'. In short, liberals who ask what is just by abstracting from particular social contexts are doomed to philosophical incoherence and liberal theorists who adopt this method to persuade people to do the just thing are doomed to political irrelevance.

Rawls has since tried to eliminate the universalist presuppositions from his theory. In *Political Liberalism*, he argues in a communitarian vein that his conception of the person as impartial citizen provides the best account of liberal-democratic political culture and that his political aim is only to work out the rules for consensus in political communities where people are willing to try for consensus. In the *Law of Peoples*, he explicitly allows for the possibility that liberalism may not be exportable at all times and places, sketching a vision of a 'decent, well-ordered society' that liberal societies must tolerate in the international realm. Such a society, he argues, need not be democratic, but it must be non-aggressive towards other communities, and internally it must have a 'common good conception of justice', a 'reasonable consultation hierarchy', and it must secure basic human rights. Having said that, one still gets the sense that the liberal vision laid out in *A Theory of Justice* is the best possible political ideal, one that all rational individuals would want if they were able to choose between the available political alternatives. There may be justifiable non-liberal regimes, but these should be regarded as second best to be tolerated and perhaps respected, not idealized or emulated.

Other liberal theorists have taken a harder line against communitarian concessions, arguing that liberal theory can and should present itself as a universally valid ideal. Brian Barry, for one, opens his widely cited book *Justice as Impartiality* by boldly affirming

the universality of his theory: 'I continue to believe in the possibility of putting forward a universally valid case in favor of liberal egalitarian principles'. Barry does recognize that a theory of justice must be anchored in substantive moral considerations, but his normative vision appears to be limited to the values and practices of liberal Western societies. He seems distinctly uninterested in learning anything worthwhile from non-Western political traditions: for example, his discussion of things Chinese is confined to brief criticisms of the Cultural Revolution and the traditional practice of foot-binding. One might consider the reaction to a Chinese intellectual who puts forward a universal theory of justice that draws on the Chinese political tradition for inspiration and completely ignores the history and moral argumentation in Western societies, except for brief criticisms of slavery and imperialism.

NOTES

Still, it must be conceded that 1980s communitarian theorists were less-than-successful at putting forward attractive visions of non-liberal societies. The communitarian case for pluralism for the need to respect and perhaps learn from non-liberal societies that may be as good as, if not better than, the liberal societies of the West may have been unintentionally undermined by their own use of (counter) examples. In *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre defended the Aristotelian ideal of the intimate, reciprocating local community bound by shared ends, where people simply assume and fulfill socially given roles. But this pre-modern Gemeinschaft conception of an all-encompassing community that members unreflectively endorse seemed distinctly ill-suited for complex and conflict-ridden large-scale industrialized societies. In *Spheres of Justice,* Michael Walzer pointed to the Indian caste system, 'where the social meanings are integrated and hierarchical' as an example of a non-liberal society that may be just according to its own standards. Not surprisingly, few readers were inspired by this example of non-liberal justice (not to mention the fact that many contemporary Indian thinkers view the caste system as an unfortunate legacy of the past that Indians should strive hard to overcome). In short, this use of ill-informed examples may have unintentionally reinforced the view that there are few if any justifiable alternatives to liberalism in modern societies. Communitarians could score some theoretical points by urging liberal thinkers to be cautious about developing universal arguments founded exclusively on the moral argumentation and political experience of Western liberal societies, but few thinkers would really contemplate the possibility of non-liberal practices appropriate for the modern world so long as the alternatives to liberalism consisted of Golden Ages, caste societies, fascism, or actually-existing communism. For the communitarian critique of liberal universalism to have any lasting credibility, thinkers need to provide compelling counter-examples to modern-day liberal-democratic regimes and 1980s communitarians came up short.

By the 1990s, fairly abstract methodological disputes over universalism versus particularism faded from academic prominence, and the debate now centers on the theory and practice of universal human rights. This is largely due to the increased political salience of human rights since the collapse of communism in the former Soviet bloc. On the liberal side, the new, more political voices for liberal universalism have been represented by the likes of Francis Fukuyama, who famously argued that liberal democracy's triumph over its rivals signifies the end of history. This view also revived (and provoked) the second wave communitarian critique of liberal universalism and the debate became much more concrete and political in orientation.

Needless to say, the brief moment of liberal euphoria that followed the collapse of the communism in the Soviet bloc has given way to a sober assessment of the difficulties of implementing liberal practices outside the Western world. It is now widely recognized that brutal ethnic warfare, crippling poverty, environmental degradation, and pervasive

NOTES

corruption, to name some of the more obvious troubles afflicting the developing world, pose serious obstacles to the successful establishment and consolidation of liberal democratic political arrangements. But these were seen as unfortunate (hopefully temporary) afflictions that may delay the end of history when liberal democracy has finally triumphed over its rivals. They were not meant to pose a challenge to the ideal of liberal democracy. It was widely assumed that liberal democracy is something that all rational individuals would want if they could get it.

The deeper challenge to Western liberal democracy has emerged from the East Asian region. In the 1990s, the debate revolved around the notion of 'Asian values', a term devised by several Asian officials and their supporters for the purpose of challenging Western-style civil and political freedoms. Asians, they claim, place special emphasis upon family and social harmony, with the implication that those in the chaotic and crumbling societies of the West should think twice about intervening in Asia for the sake of promoting human rights and democracy. As Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew put it, Asians have 'little doubt that a society with communitarian values where the interests of society take precedence over that of the individual suits them better than the individualism of America'. Such claims attracted international attention primarily because East Asian leaders seemed to be presiding over what a U.N. human development report called 'the most sustained and widespread development miracle of the twentieth century, perhaps all history'. In 1997-98, however, the East Asian miracle seemed to have collapsed. And it looks like Asian values was one casualty of the crisis.

The political factors that focused attention on the East Asian challenge remain in place, however. East Asian economies did eventually recover (though exporting Asian economies were hard hit by the 2008 financial crisis). China in particular looks set to become an economic and political heavyweight with the power to seriously challenge the hegemony of Western liberal democratic values in international forum. Thus, one hears frequent calls for cross-cultural dialogue between the West and the East designed to understand and perhaps learn from the other side. Failing to take seriously the East Asian political perspectives risks, widening misunderstandings and setting the stage for hostilities that could have been avoided.

From a theoretical point of view, however, it must be conceded that the official debate on Asian values has not provided much of a challenge to dominant Western political outlooks. The main problem is that the debate has been led by Asian leaders who seem to be motivated primarily by political considerations, rather than by a sincere desire to make a constructive contribution to the debate on universalism versus particularism. Thus, it was easy to dismiss—rightly so, in most cases—the Asian challenge as nothing but a self-serving ploy by government leaders to justify their authoritarian rule in the face of increasing demands for democracy at home and abroad.

Still, it would be a mistake to assume that nothing of theoretical significance has emerged from East Asia. The debate on Asian values has also prompted critical intellectuals in the region to reflect on how they can locate themselves in a debate on human rights and democracy in which they had not previously played a substantial part. Neither wholly rejecting nor wholly endorsing the values and practices ordinarily realized through a liberal democratic political regime, these intellectuals are drawing on their own cultural traditions and exploring areas of commonality and difference with the West. Though often less provocative than the views of their governments in the sense that few argue for the wholesale rejection of Western-style liberal democracy with an East Asian alternative these unofficial East Asian viewpoints may offer more lasting contributions to the debate. Let us (briefly) note three relatively persuasive East Asian arguments for

cultural particularism that contrast with traditional Western arguments for liberal universalism:

1. Cultural factors can affect the *prioritizing* of rights, and this matters when rights conflict and it must be decided which one to sacrifice. In other words, different societies may rank rights differently, and even if they face a similar set of disagreeable circumstances they may come to different conclusions about the right that needs to be curtailed. For example, U.S. citizens may be more willing to sacrifice a social or economic right in cases of conflict with a civil or political right: if neither the constitution nor a majority of democratically elected representatives support universal access to health care, then the right to health care regardless of income can be curtailed. In contrast, the Chinese may be more willing to sacrifice a civil or political liberty in cases of conflict with a social or economic right: there may be wide support for restrictions on the right to form independent labor associations if they are necessary to provide the conditions for economic development. Different priorities assigned to rights can also matter when it must be decided how to spend scarce resources. For example, East Asian societies with a Confucian heritage will place great emphasis upon the value of education, and they may help to explain the large amount of spending on education compared to other societies with similar levels of economic development.
2. Cultural factors can affect the *justification* of rights. In line with the arguments of '1980s communitarians' such as Michael Walzer, it is argued that justifications for particular practices valued by Western-style liberal democrats should not be made by relying on the abstract and unhistorical universalism that often disables Western liberal democrats. Rather, they should be made from the inside, from specific examples and argumentative strategies that East Asians themselves use in everyday moral and political debate. For example, the moral language (shared even by some local critics of authoritarianism) tends to appeal to the value of community in East Asia, and this is relevant for social critics concerned with practical effect. One such communitarian argument is that democratic rights in Singapore can be justified on the grounds that they contribute to strengthening ties to such communities as the family and the nation.
3. Cultural factors can provide moral foundations for *distinctive* political practices and institutions (or at least different from those found in Western-style liberal democracies). In East Asian societies, influenced by Confucianism, for example, it is widely held that children have a profound duty to care for elderly parents, a duty to be forsaken only in the most exceptional circumstances. In political practice, it means that East Asian governments have an obligation to provide the social and economic conditions that facilitate the realization of this duty. Political debate tends to center on the question of whether the right to filial piety is best realized by means of a law that makes it mandatory for children to provide financial support for elderly parents as in mainland China, Japan, and Singapore or whether the state should rely more on indirect methods such as tax breaks and housing benefits that simply make at-home care for the elderly easier, as in Korea and Hong Kong. But the argument that there is a pressing need to secure this duty in East Asia is not a matter of political controversy.

In contrast to 1980s communitarian thinkers, East Asian critics of liberal universalism have succeeded in pointing to particular non-liberal practices and institutions that may be appropriate for the contemporary world. Some of these may be appropriate only for

NOTES

NOTES

societies with a Confucian heritage; others may also offer insights for mitigating the excesses of liberal modernity in the West. What cannot be denied is that they have carried forward the debate beyond the implausible alternatives to liberalism offered by 1980s communitarian thinkers. It is worth emphasizing, however, that contemporary communitarians have not been merely defending parochial attachments to particular non-liberal moralities. Far from arguing that the universalist discourse on human rights should be entirely displaced with particular, tradition-sensitive political language, they have criticized liberals for not taking universality seriously enough, for failing to do what must be done to make human rights a truly universal ideal. These communitarians—let us label them the 'cosmopolitan critics of liberal universalism'—have suggested various means of improving the philosophical coherence and political appeal of human rights. In fact, there is little debate over the desirability of a core set of human rights, such as prohibitions against slavery, genocide, murder, torture, prolonged arbitrary detention, and systematic racial discrimination. These rights have become part of international customary law, and they are not contested in the public rhetoric of the international arena. Of course many gross violations occur off the record, and human rights groups such as Amnesty International have the task of exposing the gap between public allegiance to rights and the sad reality of ongoing abuse. This is largely practical work, however. There is not much point writing about or deliberating about the desirability of practices that everyone condemns at the level of principle.

But political thinkers and activists around the world can and do take different sides on many pressing human rights concerns that fall outside what Walzer terms the 'minimal and universal moral code'. This gray area of debate includes criminal law, family law, women's rights, social and economic rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, and the attempt to universalize Western-style democratic practices. The question is: how can the current thin list of universal human rights be expanded to include some of these contested rights?

Charles Taylor has put forward the following proposal. He imagines a cross-cultural dialogue between representatives of different traditions. Rather than argue for the universal validity of their views, however, he suggests that participants should allow for the possibility that their own beliefs may be mistaken. This way, participants can learn from each others' 'moral universe'. There will come a point, however, when differences cannot be reconciled. Taylor explicitly recognizes that different groups, countries, religious communities, and civilizations hold incompatible fundamental views on theology, metaphysics, and human nature. In response, Taylor argues that a 'genuine, unforced consensus' on human rights norms is possible only if we allow for disagreement on the ultimate justifications of those norms. Instead of defending contested foundational values when we encounter points of resistance (and thus condemning the values we do not like in other societies), we should try to abstract from those beliefs for the purpose of working out an 'overlapping consensus' of human rights norms. As Taylor puts it, 'we would agree on the norms while disagreeing on why they were the right norms, and we would be content to live in this consensus, undisturbed by the differences of profound underlying belief'.

While Taylor's proposal moves the debate on universal human rights forward, it still faces certain difficulties. For one thing, it may not be realistic to expect that people will be willing to abstract from the values they care deeply about during the course of a global dialogue on human rights. Even if people agree to abstract from culturally specific ways of justifying and implementing norms, the likely outcome is a withdrawal to a

highly general, abstract realm of agreement that fails to resolve actual disputes over contested rights. For example, participants in a cross-cultural dialogue can agree on the right not to be subject to cruel and unusual punishment while radically disagreeing upon what this means in practice—a committed Muslim can argue that theft can justifiably be punished by amputation of the right hand, whereas a Western liberal will want to label this an example of cruel and unusual punishment.

NOTES

As we have seen, the debate on universalism versus particularism has moved from fairly abstract methodological disputes between Anglo-American philosophers to relatively concrete international political disputes between philosophers, social scientists, government officials, and NGO activists. The distinctive communitarian contribution has been to cast doubt on universal theories grounded exclusively in the liberal moralities of the Western world, on the grounds that cultural particularity should both make one sensitive to the possibility of justifiable areas of difference between the West and the rest and to the need for more cross-cultural dialogue for the purpose of improving the current thin human rights regime. Various contributions from East Asia and elsewhere have given some meat to these challenges to liberal universalism. In any case, let us now turn to the second main area of controversy between liberals and communitarians—the debate over the self that has similarly moved from philosophy to politics.

3.4.1 The Debate Over the Self

Communitarian thinkers in the 1980s such as Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor argued that Rawlsian liberalism rests on an overly individualistic conception of the self. Whereas Rawls argues that we have a supreme interest in shaping, pursuing, and revising our own life-plans, he neglects the fact that our selves tend to be defined or constituted by various communal attachments (e.g., ties to the family or to a religious tradition) so close to us that they can only be set aside at great cost, if at all. This insight led to the view that politics should not be concerned solely with securing the conditions for individuals to exercise their powers of autonomous choice, as we also need to sustain and promote the social attachments crucial to our sense of well-being and respect, many of which have been involuntarily picked up during the course of our upbringing. First, however, let us review the ontological or metaphysical debate over the self that led to this political conclusion.

In an influential essay titled 'Atomism', Charles Taylor objected to the liberal view that 'men are self-sufficient outside of society'. Instead, Taylor defends the Aristotelian view that 'Man is a social animal, indeed a political animal, because he is not self-sufficient alone, and in an important sense is not self-sufficient outside a polis'. Moreover, this atomistic view of the self can undermine liberal society, because it fails to grasp the extent to which liberalism presumes a context where individuals are members of, and committed to, a society that promotes particular values such as freedom and individual diversity. Fortunately, most people in liberal societies do not really view themselves as atomistic selves.

But do liberal thinkers actually defend the idea that the self is created *ex-nihilo*, outside of any social context and that humans can exist (and flourish) independently of all social contexts? In fact, Taylor's essay was directed at the libertarian thinker Robert Nozick. As it turns out, the communitarian critique of the atomistic self does not apply to Rawslian liberalism: in Part III of *Theory of Justice*, Rawls pays close attention to the psychological and social conditions that facilitate the formation of liberal selves committed to justice. But few readers ever got to

NOTES

Part III of Rawls massive tome, so communitarians got quite a bit of mileage from their critique of liberal atomism. This charge didn't stick, however.

While liberals may not have been arguing that individuals can *completely* extricate themselves from their social context, the liberal valuation of choice still seemed to suggest an image of a subject who impinges his will on the world. Drawing on the insights of Heidegger and Wittgenstein, communitarians argued that this view neglects the extent to which individuals are embodied agents in the world. Far from acting in ways designed to realize an autonomously arrived-at life-plan, vast areas of our lives are in fact governed by unchosen routines and habits that lie in the background. More often than not we act in ways specified by our social background when we walk, dress, play games, speaks, and so on without having formulated any goals or made any choices. It is only when things break down from the normal, everyday, unchosen mode of existence that we think of ourselves as subjects dealing with an external world, having the experience of formulating various ways of executing our goals, choosing from among those ways, and accepting responsibility for the outcomes of our actions. In other words, traditional intentionality is introduced at the point that our ordinary way of coping with things is insufficient. Yet this breakdown mode is what we tend to notice, and philosophers have therefore argued that most of our actions are occasioned by processes of reflection. Liberals have picked up this mistaken assumption, positing the idea of a subject who seeks to realize an autonomously arrived-at life-plan, losing sight of the fact that critical reflection upon ones ends is nothing more than one possibility that arises when our ordinary ways of coping with things is insufficient to get things done.

Some liberals have replied by recognizing the point that vast areas of our lives are governed by unchosen habits and routines, that the deliberate, effortful, choosing subject mode may be the exception rather than the rule. They emphasize, however, that the main justification for a liberal politics concerned primarily with securing the conditions for individuals to lead autonomous lives rests on the possibility and desirability of normative self-determination, that is, on the importance of making choices with respect to things that we value. While it may be true that certain communal practices often, or even mostly, guide our behavior behind our backs, it doesn't follow that those practices ought to be valued, or reflectively endorsed in non-ordinary moments of existence, much less that the government ought somehow to promote these practices. And what liberals care about ultimately is the provision of the rights, powers, and opportunities that individuals need to develop and implement their own conceptions of the good life.

This qualified version of the liberal self, however, still seems to imply that moral outlooks are, or should be, the product of individual choice. One's social world, communitarians can reply, provides more than non-moral social practices like table manners and pronunciation norms—it also provides some sort of orientation in moral space. We cannot make sense of our moral experience unless we situate ourselves within this given moral space, within the authoritative moral horizons. What Charles Taylor calls 'higher, strongly evaluated goods' the goods we should feel committed to, those that generate moral obligations on us regardless of our actual preferences are not somehow invented by individuals, but rather they are located within the social world which provides one's framework of the lower and the higher. Thus, the liberal ideal of a self who freely invents her own moral outlook, or private conception of the good, cannot do justice to our actual moral experience.

But once again, liberals need not deny the assumption that our social world provides a framework of the higher and the lower nor need it be presumed that we must regard

our own moral outlook as freely invented. Will Kymlicka, for example, explicitly recognizes that things have worth for us in so far as they are granted significance by our culture, in so far as they fit into a pattern of activities which is recognized by those sharing a certain form of life as a way of leading a good life. That one's social world provides the range of things worth doing, achieving, or being does not, however, undermine the liberal emphasis on autonomy, for there is still substantial room for individual choice to be made within this set. The best life is still the one where the individual chooses what is worth doing, achieving, or being, though it may be that this choice has to be made within a certain framework which is itself unchosen.

NOTES

Communitarians can reply by casting doubt on the view that choice is intrinsically valuable, that a certain moral principle or communal attachment is more valuable simply because it has been chosen following deliberation among alternatives by an individual subject. If we have a highest-order interest in choosing our central projects and life-plans, regardless of what is chosen, it ought to follow that there is something fundamentally wrong with unchosen attachments and projects. But this view violates our actual self-understandings. We ordinarily think of ourselves, Michael Sandel says, 'as members of this family or community or nation or people, as bearers of this history, as sons or daughters of that revolution, as citizens of this republic', social attachments that more often than not are involuntarily picked up during the course of our upbringing, rational choice having played no role whatsoever. I didn't choose to love my mother and father, to care about the neighborhood in which I grew up, to have special feelings for the people of my country, and it is difficult to understand why anyone would think I have chosen these attachments, or that I ought to have done so. In fact, there may even be something distasteful about someone who questions the things he or she deeply cares about—certainly no marriage could survive too long if fundamental understandings regarding love and trust were constantly thrown open for discussion! Nor is it obvious that, say, someone who performs a good deed following prolonged calculation of pros and cons is morally superior than a Mother Teresa type who unreflectively, spontaneously acts on behalf of other people's interests.

Liberals can reply that the real issue is not the desirability of choice but rather the possibility of choice. There may well be some unchosen attachments that need not be critically reflected upon and endorsed, and it may even be the case that excessive deliberation about the things we care about can occasionally be counter-productive. But some of our ends may be problematic and that is why we have a fundamental interest in being able to question and revise them. Most important is not choosing our own life-plans; rather, liberalism founded on the value of self-determination requires only that we be able to critically evaluate our ends if need be, hence that 'no end or goal is exempt from possible re-examination'. For example, an oppressed woman has a fundamental interest in being able to critically reflect upon traditional understandings of what it means to be a good wife and mother, and it would be unjust to foreclose her freedom to radically revise her plans.

This response, however, still leaves open the possibility of a deep challenge to liberal foundations. Perhaps we are able to reexamine some attachments, but the problem for liberalism arises if there are others so fundamental to our identity that they cannot be set aside, and that any attempt to do so will result in serious and perhaps irreparable psychological damage. In fact, this challenge to liberalism would only require that communitarians be able to identify one end or communal attachment so constitutive of one's identity that it cannot be revised and rejected. A psychoanalyst, for example, may

NOTES

want to argue that (at least in some cases) it is impossible to choose to shed the attachment one feels for one's mother, and that an attempt may lead to perverse and unintended consequences. A feminist theorist may point to the mother-child relationship as an example of a constitutive feature of one's identity and argue that any attempt to deny this fails to be sensitive to women's special needs and experiences. An anthropologist may argue on the basis of field observations that it is impossible for an Inuit person from Canada's far north to suddenly decide to stop being an Inuit and that the only sensible response is to recognize and accept this constitutive feature of his identity. Or a gay liberation activist may claim that it is both impossible and undesirable for gays to repress their biologically-given sexual identity. These arguments are not implausible, and they seem to challenge the liberal view that no particular end or commitment should be beyond critical reflection and open to revision.

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that we can identify one particular attachment so deeply-embedded that it is impossible to really bring to conscious awareness and so significant for one's well-being that an individual can only forsake commitment to its good at the cost of being seriously psychologically disturbed. This end is beyond willed change and one loses a commitment to it at the price of being thrown into a state of disorientation where one is unable to take a stand on many things of significance. Does this really threaten liberal politics? It may, if liberal politics really rests on the liberal self. Fortunately, that is not the case. Rereading some of the communitarian texts from the 1980s, there seems to have been an assumption that once you expose faulty foundations regarding the liberal self, the whole liberal edifice will come tumbling down. The task is to criticize the underlying philosophy of the self, win people on your side, and then we can move on to a brand new communitarian society that owes nothing to the liberal tradition. This must have been an exhilarating time for would-be revolutionaries, but more level-headed communitarians soon realized that overthrowing liberal rights was never part of the agenda. Even if liberals are wrong to deny the existence of constitutive ends—even if the philosophical justifications for a liberal form of social organization founded on the value of reflective choice are rotten to the core—there are still many, relatively pragmatic reasons for caring about rights in the modern world. To name some of the more obvious benefits, liberal rights often contribute to security, political stability and economic modernization.

In short, the whole debate about the self appears to have been somewhat misconceived. Liberals were wrong to think they needed to provide iron-clad philosophies of the self to justify liberal politics, and communitarians were wrong to think that challenging those foundations was sufficient to undermine liberal politics. Not surprisingly, both sides soon got tired of debating the pros and cons of the liberal self. By the early 1990s, this liberal-communitarian debate over the self had effectively faded from view in Anglo-American philosophy.

So what remains of the communitarian conception of the self? What may be distinctive about communitarians is that they are more inclined to argue that individuals have a vital interest in leading decent communal lives, with the political implication that there may be a need to sustain and promote the communal attachments crucial to our sense of well-being. This is not necessarily meant to challenge the liberal view that some of our communal attachments can be problematic and may need to be changed, thus that the state needs to protect our powers to shape, pursue, and revise our own life-plans. But our interest in community may occasionally conflict with our other vital interest in leading freely chosen lives, and the communitarian view is that the latter does not

automatically trump the former in cases of conflict. On the continuum between freedom and community, communitarians are more inclined to draw the line towards the latter.

Communitarians begin by positing a need to experience our lives as bound up with the good of the communities out of which our identity has been constituted. This excludes contingent attachments such as golf-club memberships, that do not usually bear on ones sense of identity and well-being (the co-authors of *Habits of the Heart* employ the term 'lifestyle enclaves' to describe these attachments). Unlike pre-modern defenders of *Gemeinshaft*, however, it is assumed that there are many valued forms of communal life in the modern world. So the distinctive communitarian political project is to identify valued forms of community and to devise policies designed to protect and promote them, without sacrificing too much freedom. Typically, communitarians would invoke the following types of communities:

NOTES

1. Communities of place, or communities based on geographical location. This is perhaps the most common meaning associated with the word community. In this sense, community is linked to locality, in the physical, geographical sense of a community that is located somewhere. It can refer to a small village or a big city. A community of place also has an affective component—it refers to the place one calls 'home', often the place where one is born and bred and the place where one would like to end one's days even if home is left as an adult. At the very least, communitarians posit an interest in identifying with familiar surroundings.

   In terms of political implications, it means that, for example, political authorities ought to consider the existent character of the local community when considering plans for development Jane Jacobs famously documented the negative effects of razing, instead of renovating, run-down tenements that are replaced by functionally adequate but characterless low-income housing blocs. Other suggestions to protect communities of place include: granting community councils veto power over building projects that fail to respect existent architectural styles; implementing laws regulating plant closures so as to protect local communities from the effects of rapid capital mobility and sudden industrial change; promoting local-ownership of corporations; and imposing restrictions on large-scale discount outlets such as Wal-Mart that threaten to displace small, fragmented, and diverse family and locally owned stores.

2. Communities of memory, or groups of strangers who share a morally-significant history. This term—first employed by the co-authors of *Habits of the Heart*—refers to imagined communities that have a shared history going back several generations. Besides tying us to the past, such communities turn us towards the future—members strive to realize the ideals and aspirations embedded in past experiences of those communities, seeing their efforts as being, in part, contributions to a common good. They provide a source of meaning and hope in people lives. Typical examples include the nation and language-based ethnocultural groups.

   In Western liberal democracies, this typically translates into various nation-building exercises meant to nourish the bonds of commonality that tie people to their nations, such as national service and national history lessons in school textbooks. Self-described republicans such as Michael Sandel place special emphasis upon the national political community and argue for measures that increase civic engagement and public-spiritedness. However, there is increased recognition of the multi-national nature of contemporary states, and modern Western states must also try to make room for the political rights of minority groups. These

NOTES

political measures have been widely discussed in the recent literature on nationalism, citizenship, and multiculturalism.

3. Psychological communities or communities of face-to-face personal interaction governed by sentiments of trust, co-operation, and altruism. This refers to a group of persons who participate in common activity and experience a psychological sense of togetherness as shared ends are sought. Such communities, based on face-to-face interaction, are governed by sentiments of trust, cooperation, and altruism in the sense that constituent members have the good of the community in mind and act on behalf of the community's interest. They differ from communities of place by not being necessarily defined by locality and proximity. The differ from communities of memory in the sense that they are more 'real', they are typically based on face to face social interaction at one point in time and consequently tend to be restricted in size. The family is the prototypical example. Other examples include small-scale work or school settings founded on trust and social cooperation.

Communitarians tend to favor policies designed to protect and promote ties to the family and family-like groups. This would include such measures as encouraging marriage and increasing the difficulty of legal marriage dissolution. These policies are supported by empirical evidence that points to the psychological and social benefits of marriage. Communitarians also favor political legislation that can help to restructure education in such a way that peoples deepest needs in membership and participation in psychological communities are tapped at a young age. The primary school system in Japan, where students learn about group cooperation and benefits and rewards are assigned to the classroom as a whole rather than to individual students, could be a useful model.

What makes the political project of communitarianism distinctive is that it involves the promotion of all three forms of valued communal life. This leads, however, to the worry that seeking the goods of various communities may conflict in practice. Etzioni, for example, argues for a whole host of pro-family measures: mothers and fathers should devote more time and energy to parenting (in view of the fact that most childcare centers do a poor job of caring for children), labor unions and employers ought to make it easier for parents to work at home, and the government should force corporations to provide six months of paid leave and another year of unpaid leave. The combined effect of these changes of the heart and public policies in all likelihood would be to make citizens into largely private, family-centered persons.

Michael Sandel (1982) uses the communitarian level to criticise liberalism though subsequently he termed himself a republican. He argues that liberal theories justifies an individualism radically unembedded in concrete social institutions and in the wrong thus giving priority to the pursuit of abstract equal justice over a communal, moral good. Pointing to Rawls conception of the individuals in the original positions as a disconnected and disembodied, he concludes that liberal theory is fail to understand our 'embeddedness' in a particular times, place and culture. This is a fact that a political theory has to recognise if it is seeking to generate laws, institutions and practices that are truly good for us and constitutive if an ideal and fully just society. Justice must be theorised not only as the basis of individual who are independent and separate desiring to profit from one another but from people with attachments that partially constitute their identities, who come to know and relate to one another. In his book *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982), Micheal Sandel has asserted that a person can only be understood in the context of his 'embededness' in a particular times, place and culture. Only with this understanding a political theory can generate laws, institutions and practices that would be genuinely

good for us and contribute to a fully just society. This alone will create a 'deeper communality' which will be informed by 'shared self-understanding' as well as affection.

Micheal Sandel in his book *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982) attacked John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971), for his conception of rational negotiators deliberating as the disconnected and disembodied individuals in the so-called 'original positions' who have come together to find out the principle of justice. It is a typical representation of the liberal attitude which tries to understand human beings independently of all activities; desires, ideas, roles and pursuits that characterise human lives in an actual society. Sandel observes that after subtracting all these characteristics, nothing in left of the person whom we want to understand. Sandel asserts that the person can only be understood in the context of his 'embeddedness' in a particular time, place and culture. Only with this understanding, a political theory can generate laws, institutions and practices that would be genuinely good for us and conducive to a fully just society. This alone will create a 'deeper commonality' which will be informed by 'shared self understanding' as well as affection.

NOTES

Michael Walzer, a left communitarian, argues for what he calls 'complex' as opposed to 'simple equality'; that is, a notion of distributive justice based on different rules of distribution for different social goods, rather then one procrustean rule requiring equal holdings of everything for everyone. Politics, the economy, the family, the workplace, the military are is different spheres having different principles of distribution. Justice required that the integrity of its sphere should be maintained as a transgression from the others. In an implicit critique of Rawls, Walzer points out that the various principles of justice in each sphere are local rather then universal and these have to be based only on the common understandings of a particular people with an historical identity. In other words, there is no single principle of distributive justice, which holds true for all societies, in all places and at all times. Philosophical systems could advance such a principle in view of cultural diversity and pluralistic political choices. Walzer believes that questions about justice can only be answered by exploring the 'shared meaning' of a particular society. The problem, however, remains about the objectivity of these shared meanings? Only on this basis it is possible to create a deeper community with shared self understanding and affection.

Michel Walzer (*Spheres of Justice, 1983*) has sought to reconstruct the liberal approach to justice–as the problem of determining suitable criteria of distribution–by introducing a communitarian approach to this problem. Walzer has argued that criteria of distribution should correspond to the 'spheres' in which distribution is being considered, so that, for instance, economic justice will be different from political justice. According to Walzer, each sphere of justice will have its own right reason (or relevant reason) for distribution of good that it distributes. Thus the sphere of politics, or health, or education, should be uncontaminated by the domination of money, for money properly, rules in the sphere of commodities; the sphere of office should not (beyond a certain limit point) be contaminated by nepotism, which belongs to the sphere of kinship and love; the sphere of kinship should not be contaminated by male domination. The market properly conceived as the place for the distribution of various social goods on a reasonable basis should be free for all. As the dominance of money (above all) is incompatible with the integrity of politics, merit, kinship etc., so the dominance of money in all these spheres must finally disappear. Walzer's vision of a new social order comprehends the appropriate arrangements of a decentralized democratic socialism: a strong welfare state run, in part at least, by local and amateurs officials; a constrained market; an open and demystified civil service; independent public schools; the sharing of hard work and free time; the

NOTES

protection of religious and familial life; a system of public honouring and dishonouring free from all considerations of rank and class; workers' control of companies and factories; a politics and parties, movements, meetings and public debate. In his book *Spheres of Justice* (1983), he has led down elaborate criteria for the distribution of various social goods according to the proper spheres of their applications, where they would contribute to the smooth functioning of the community.

In his book *After Virtue* (1981), Alasdair MacIntyre has argued that individuals flourish only with in an atmosphere of 'socially established cooperative human activity'. If the state treats individuals as disconnected entities and lets them loose to realise their rights without realising that duties, the result would be social disintegration and moral disaster. MacIntyre constructs an idea of the narrative self: a notion of personal identity that comes from the wave of social and communal bond. He argues that 'individuality' owes its origin to the framework of an established community; it cannot be the product of an individual's choice. MacIntyre ridicules the liberals' concept of individual as an 'autonomous moral agents', disconnected from the social fabric. He argues that individual flourish only within an atmosphere of 'socially established cooperative human activity'. The state must promote and protect this activity and their by encourage the development of human excellence. MacIntyre and other communitarians believe that if the state treats individuals as disconnected beings and let them loose to realize their rights (as liberal seem to wish), the result would be social disintegration and moral disaster. Such disaster has already become visible in modern liberal states as evident in the prevalence of crime and violence, the breakdown of the family, and the rampant drug abuse.

Charles Taylor in his book *Philosophical Papers* (1985) echoed MacIntyre's attack on the liberal conception of 'atomistic' individual and conformed the tenants of communitarianism. Taylor argued that if human beings want their genuine development, they must acknowledge first that they are situated in a society. They can realise their good only through cooperation in the pursuit of the common good. According to Taylor liberals claim that the freedom to choose our projects is inherently valuable, something to be pursued for its own sake, a claim that can be rejected as empty. Instead, he say, there has to be some project that is worth pursuing, some task that is worth fulfilling.

In a communitarian society, the common good is conceived of as a substantive conception of the good life which defines the community's way of life. This common good, rather than adjusting itself to the pattern of people's preferences, provides a standard by which those preferences are evaluated. The community's way of life forms the basis for a public ranking of conceptions of the good, and the weight given to an individuals preferences depends on how much she conforms or contributes to this common good.

Communitarians talks of two-level relationship with the individual at one level and the state at the other and the intermediate position between the individual and the state is occupied by groups and communities. Communitarian thinkers criticise liberal political theory mainly for it's overemphasis on individual. They argued that the liberal conception of the self and the relationship between the individual and the state are inherently flawed, unduly limited as well as the misrepresentative of the true nature of society. They criticised liberal individualism for it's prioritising the rights and freedom of individual's and neglecting the importance of community membership to social and political life. Communitarians argue that the guarantee of a free and just state is deeply intertwined with the wellbeing of the community. The main objective of an ideal state is two employ its power and authority to encourage the continuation and health of those cultural traditions and values that serve to determine the common good.

In a nutshell, the supporter of communitarianism advocates a state with a positive function of promoting the common good, unlike the liberal individualism who assigned a negative function to the state for ensuring an absence of interference in the domain of individual rights. The advocates of communitarianism focus on particular social value structures and reject the overtly abstract individualism of liberalism. Its emphasis is on the importance of particularistic moral traditions by expressing a preference for the collective pursuit of virtue rather then the defence of individual rights as a principle of social order.

NOTES

Criticism

The communitarianism has also its limitations. It is criticised that in spite of its strong ethical base, it has no mechanism to ensure that its principles will be adopted as the general rules of behaviour. Though communitarianism is endowed with strong moral philosophy, it is not founded in equally strong political philosophy. Liberals argue that any 'thicker' conception of community is inconsistent with two basic aspects of modern life: the demand for individual autonomy, and the existence of social pluralism. As Rawls put it the 'fact of pluralism' means that 'the hope of political community must be abandoned, if by such a community we mean a political society united in affirming a general and comprehensive conception of the good. Communitarians object to the neutral state. They believe it should be abandoned for a 'politics of the common good'. According to Stephen Holmes, the contrast between the 'politics of neutrality' and communitarianism's 'politics of the common good' can be misleading. There is a 'common good' present in liberal politics as well, since the policies of a liberal state in at promoting the interests of the members of the community. The political and economic processes by which individual preferences are combined into a social choice function are liberal modes of determining the common good. To affirm state neutrality, therefore, is not to reject the idea of a common good, but rather to provide an interpretation of it.

3.5 SUMMARY

- The diverse critiques seem to be based on biased interpretations of Rawls's theory of justice.
- Rawls has tried to combine different value systems in order to arrive at his theory of justice. Some tenets of these value-systems are thought to be incompatible with each other.
- Any attempt to combine them must yield a complex model. This applies to the present case also.
- Rawls theory of justice represents a convergence of libertarianism, egalitarianism and communitarianism.
- John Rawls, in the course of a close and protracted discussion of justice, has set out a mode of liberal-democratic society which he believes satisfies the concept of justice as propounded by him.
- Rawls' substantive doctrine is a rather pure form of egalitarian democracy. It is true that Rawls contemplates to retain the capitalist system on some specified conditions.
- However, it should not be forgotten that once these conditions are fulfilled, the capitalist system is bound to assume a new human look. In fact, Rawls has

Check Your Progress

5. What does the term community stand for?
6. How does communitarianism view liberalism?

NOTES

discovered a method for making procedural justice an instrument of meeting the requirements of social justice.

- Robert Nozick has provided a forceful critique of Rawls concept and put forward his theory of justice, which has very thought provocative arguments despite its serious limitations.
- Though his bias towards the market based extreme form of liberalism e.g. libertarianism is obvious; the importance of his argument lies in the fact that he has highlighted the limitations of the Rawls theory of justice and provided an alternative version to think about for the political scientist of the contemporary world.
- The greatest merit of communitarianism insists on cooperation and not competition between individuals and thereby promotes social solidarity. It inspires the isolated individual's to establish cordial relations between each other, and shows them the way to obtain emotional security.
- Communitarians insists that each of us, as an individual, develops an identity, talents and pursuits in life only as a member of the community and by sharing in its corporate life.
- According to communitarians, political life should, therefore, focus on the rights of the community, not on those of individual.
- In a nutshell, communitarian notion of the common good request the individual to pursue his goals within the structure of society, and to look for his good as part of the good of whole society.

3.6 KEY TERMS

- **Principal of equal liberty:** A principle which postulates that nobody's liberty will be sacrificed for the sake of any other benefit
- **Difference principle**: A principle which implies that any departure from equal distribution of the primary goods can be justified only when it could be proved to bring greatest benefit to the least advantaged
- **Community:** A 'network of relationships which are characterized by intimacy and durability

3.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. John Rawls' book *A Theory of Justice* provides a skeletal account of Rawls's project of using social contract theory to generate principles of justice for assigning basic rights and duties and determining the division of social benefits in a society.
2. The principal of equal liberty (for example, equal right to most extensive liberty compatible with similar liberty of others) postulates that nobody's liberty will be sacrificed for the sake of any other benefit (liberty in this sense implies equal right to political participation, freedom of expression, religious liberty, equality before the law etc).
3. Robert Nozick (November 16, 1938–January 23, 2002) was an American political philosopher, most prominent in the 1970s and 1980s. He was a professor at Harvard University.

NOTES

4. Some of Robert Nozick's major works include: *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974), *Philosophical Explanations* (1981), *The Examined Life* (1989), *The Nature of Rationality* (1993/1995), *Socratic Puzzles* (1997), *Invariances: The Structure of the Objective World*. His other work involved decision theory and epistemology. He is best known for his book *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974).
5. The terms community stands for a form of society whose members are informed by the 'community spirit' or 'a sense of community'. It denotes a 'network of relationships' which are characterized by intimacy and durability.
6. Communitarianism points to the shortcomings of liberalism and attempts to redefine the relation between individual and the community.

3.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Which are the principles of justice presented by Rawls?
2. How is Nozick's theory similar to reliabilism?
3. What are the three main principles of Nozick's 'entitlement theory?
4. What are the beliefs of the liberals?
5. Which types of communities would be invoked by communitarians?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write a note on the Rawls theory of Justice.
2. Write an essay on the relevance of Rawls theory of Justice in the present day society.
3. Critically examine the Nozick's views.
4. Compare and contrast between the Rawls' and Nozick's view.
5. Write a critical analysis of Communitarianism.

3.9 FURTHER READING

Sharma, Urmila and S.K. Sharma. 2000. *Principles and Theory of Political Science*. Atlantic Publishers.

Leopold, David and Marc Stears. 2008. *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*. Oxford University Press.

Elster, Jon. 1993. *Political Psychology*. Cambridge University Press.

Agarwal, R. C. 1991. *Political Theory: Principles of Political Science*. S. Chand Publishers.

Hoffman, John. 2007. *A Glossary of Political Theory*. Stanford University Press.

UNIT 4 MARXIST VIEW OF SCIENCE AND MARXIST APPROACH

NOTES

Structure

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will get acquainted with the Marxists view of Science and Marxist Approach. We will also be made familiar with the structuralist and Marxist analysis of political economy. We will learn about the Neo Marxist perspective on development. There will be a detailed analysis on the mode of production. The nature of state will also be analysed where we will learn about the theory of relative autonomy and the concept of authoritarian statism.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Categorize the Marxist view of science and Marxist approach
- Define structuralist and Marxist analysis of political economy
- Explain the views of Neo Marxists on development
- Identiry the analysis of mode of production
- Describe the nature of state, theory of relative autonomy and the concept of authoritarian statism

4.2 MARX'S VIEW OF SCIENCE AND MARXIST APPROACH

Karl Heinrich Marx was born on the 5th May 1818 in Trier. He was a German philosopher, sociologist, historian, political, economist, political, theorist and revolutionary socialist

NOTES

who developed the socio-political theory of Marxism. His ideas have since played a significant role in both the development of social science and also in the socialist political movement. He published various books during his lifetime with the most notable being *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Capital* (1867–1894), many of which were co-written with his friend, the fellow German revolutionary socialist Friedrich Engels.

Born into a wealthy middle class family in Trier, Prussia, Marx went on to study at both the University of Bonn and the University of Berlin, where he became interested in the philosophical ideas of the Young Hegelians. Following the completion of his studies, he became a journalist in Cologne, writing for a radical newspaper, the *Rheinische Zeitung*, where he began to use Hegelian concepts of dialectical materialism to influence his ideas on socialism. Moving to Paris in 1843, he began writing for other radical newspapers, the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* and *Vorwärts!*, as well as writing a series of books, several of which were co-written with Engels. Exiled to Brussels in Belgium in 1845, he became a leading figure of the Communist League, before moving back to Cologne, where he founded his own newspaper, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. Exiled once more, in 1849 he travelled to London where, living in poverty, he proceeded to continue writing and formulating his theories about the nature of society and how he believed it could be improved, as well as campaigning for socialism and becoming a significant figure in the International Workingmen's Association.

Marx's theories about society, economics and politics, which are collectively known as Marxism, hold that all society progresses through class struggle. He was heavily critical of the current form of society, capitalism, which he called the 'dictatorship of the bourgeoisie', believing it to be run by the wealthy middle and upper classes purely for their own benefit, and predicted that, like previous socioeconomic systems, it would inevitably produce internal tensions which would lead to its self-destruction and replacement by a new system, socialism. Under socialism, he argued that society would be governed by the working class in what he called the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', the 'workers state' or 'workers' democracy'.He believed that socialism would, in its turn, eventually be replaced by a stateless, classless society called pure communism. Along with believing in the inevitability of socialism and communism, Marx actively fought for the former's implementation, arguing that both social theorists and underprivileged people should carry out organised revolutionary action to topple capitalism and bring about socio-economic change.

While Marx remained a relatively obscure figure in his own lifetime, his ideas and the ideology of Marxism began to exert a major influence on socialist movements shortly after his death. Revolutionary socialist governments following Marxist concepts took power in a variety of countries in the 20th century, leading to the formation of such socialist states as the Soviet Union in 1922 and the People's Republic of China in 1949, whilst various theoretical variants, such as Leninism, Trotskyism and Maoism, were developed. Marx is typically cited, with Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, as one of the three principal architects of modern social science. In a 1999 BBC poll Marx was voted the 'thinker of the millennium' by people from around the world.

Marx and Engels did indeed apply what we now call Scientific Method–empirical observation, description, hypothetical explanation, and so forth–to a considerable extent in their common work. Precisely by so doing, and to the extent that they did, they made great contributions to the social sciences. They drew attention to the brutal facts of social and economic life. They combated the customary glossing over of actualities with arguments taken from theology, from some custom-made ideology or from wishful

thinking, at least if not of their own making. They pointed to interrelations between political and economic factors in history that had been widely neglected. They refused to accept the ethical value judgements of their own epoch or of earlier periods, denouncing the influence of economic and class interests on moral standards.

NOTES

Marx's materialistic view focused on the development process. Marx saw most theories, except his own, as bourgeois and ideological. In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx rejected speculative and philosophical views of reality and indicted both idealist and materialist. The eleventh thesis states, for example, 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it'. Marx urged the scientific study of reality, of 'the actual life process' and consequently he focused most of his attention on a critic of bourgeoisie capitalist society rather than on speculation about the future of society. Thus, Marx sought a clear and direct view, a materialist view of the world and, in particular, its developmental process through historical process. His perspective of development was tried to his understanding of dialectical and historical materialism.

Marx intended his understanding to be scientific in the sense of avoiding materialist or idealist abstractions in favour of 'human science'. With Engels in *The German Ideology*, he wrote that where speculation ends, in real life, there positive science begins: the depiction of the practical activity, of the practical process of development, of man. The use of science here was not positivistic in the Comtian sense. 'Marx uses the word throughout his writings in such way that it is always quite incompatible with a crude, positivistic usage, although not all of Engel's formulations are incompatible with positivism in anything like the same way.'

4.3 ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL ECONOMY–MARXIST AND STRUCTURALIST

Webster's dictionary identifies political economy in the eighteenth century as a field of Government concerned with directing policies toward the enhancement of Government and community wealth. The dictionary adds that in the nineteenth century political economy was a social science related to economies but primarily concerned with Government rather than commercial or personal economics. Webster also defines political economy as a 'social science dealing with the interrelationship of political and economic processes'. Curiously, no great tradition of political economy seems to have established itself in the discipline of Government or political science, and only recently has it come in vogue. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the work of political scientists tended to be more descriptive than theoretical and focused on formal legal and governmental institutions. The work of the mid-twentieth century followed in this tradition but also turned attention to informal institutions and processes and to problems often limited in scope and significance. The contemporary revival of interest in political economy is more the consequence of efforts by radical economists and sociologists than of efforts by political scientists.

Economist usually stresses the economic ramifications of political economy. Mandel, for example, dated political economy to 'the development of a society based on petty commodity production'. Marx's major work, *Capital*, is subtitled *A Critique of Political Economy* and emphasizes commodities, money, surplus value, and accumulation of capital. It is a three-volume work, of which only the first volume was published in his

Check Your Progress

1. Name the most notable books published by Karl Marx.
2. What was Marx's perspective of development?

NOTES

lifetime (the others were published by Friedrich Engels from Marx's notes). One of Marx's early works, *Critique of Political Economy*, was mostly incorporated into *Capital*, especially the beginning of Volume I. Marx's notes made in preparation for writing *Capital* were published years later under the title *Grundrisse*. Marx's economics took as its starting point the work of the best-known economists of his day, the British classical economists. Among these economists were Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, and David Ricardo.

Adam Smith, in *The Wealth of Nations*, argued that the most important characteristic of a market economy was that it permitted a rapid growth in productive abilities. Smith claimed that a growing market stimulated a greater 'division of labour' (i.e., specialization of businesses and/or workers) and this, in turn, led to greater productivity. Although Smith generally said little about laborers, he did note that an increased division of labour could at some point cause harm to those whose jobs became narrower and narrower as the division of labor expanded. Smith maintained that a laissez-faire economy would naturally correct itself over time.

Marx followed Smith by claiming that the most important (and perhaps only) beneficial economic consequence of capitalism was a rapid growth in productivity abilities. Marx also expanded greatly on the notion that laborers could come to harm as capitalism became more productive. Additionally, in *Theories of Surplus Value*, Marx noted, 'We see the great advance made by Adam Smith beyond the Physiocrats in the analysis of surplus-value and hence of capital. In their view, it is only one definite kind of concrete labour—agricultural labour—that creates surplus-value . . . . But to Adam Smith, it is general social labour—no matter in what use-values it manifests itself—the mere quantity of necessary labour, which creates value. Surplus-value, whether it takes the form of profit, rent, or the secondary form of interest, is nothing but a part of this labour, appropriated by the owners of the material conditions of labour in the exchange with living labour'.

Malthus' claim, in 'An Essay on the Principle of Population', that population growth was the primary cause of subsistence level wages for laborers provoked Marx to develop an alternative theory of wage determination. Whereas Malthus presented an ahistorical theory of population growth, Marx offered a theory of how a relative surplus population in capitalism tended to push wages to subsistence levels. Marx saw this relative surplus population as coming from economic causes and not from biological causes (as in Malthus). This economic-based theory of surplus population is often labeled as Marx's theory of the reserve army of labour.

Ricardo developed a theory of distribution within capitalism, that is, a theory of how the output of society is distributed to classes within society. The most mature version of this theory, presented in 'On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation', was based on a labor theory of value in which the value of any produced object is equal to the labor embodied in the object. (Adam Smith also presented a labor theory of value but it was only incompletely realized.) Also notable in Ricardo's economic theory was that profit was a deduction from society's output and that wages and profit were inversely related: an increase in profit came at the expense of a reduction in wages. Marx built much of the formal economic analysis found in *Capital* on Ricardo's theory of the economy.

In his preface *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx began with such terms as capital, landed property, and wage labour. In his introduction, Marx focused on 'all material production by individuals as determined by society', and he indicated his predecessors Adam Smith and Pierre Joseph Proudhon, among others,

NOTES

for basing their conceptions of political economy upon illusions of an eighteenth-century society of free competition in which the individual appears liberated from the constraints of nature. Marx reminded us that notion of individual freedom evolved with the breakup of feudal forms of society and, since the sixteenth century, with the creation of new forces of production. By the eighteenth century, bourgeois society had implanted itself. It was a period in which the view of the isolated individual prevailed, yet was one in which the interrelationships of individual and society had reached such a high level that the individual could develop only in society, not in isolation from it. Against this illusion of individualism, personified in Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, Marx set his critique of the early bourgeois conceptions of political economy. The work of Adam Smith tended to perpetuate this bourgeois conception, influencing David Ricardo whose theory of value served the utopian socialists such as Robert Owen in England and Pierre Joseph Proudhon in France. Marx's discovery of Ricardo's thought led him to a reassessment, critique, and a new understanding of political economy.

Marx employed a labour theory of value, which holds that the value of a commodity is the socially necessary labour time invested in it. Capitalists, however, do not pay workers the full value of the commodities they produce, but compensate the worker for the necessary labour only (the worker's wage, which cover only the necessary means of subsistence in order to maintain him working in the present and his family in the future as a group-the working class-absolutely necessary for the existence of the capital-labour relation, the essence of the capitalist mode of production). This necessary labour is, in fact, only a fraction of a full working day, and the rest, the surplus-labour, is, in fact, pocketed by the capitalist. Marx theorized that the gap between the value a worker produces and his wage is a form of unpaid labour, known as surplus value. Moreover, Marx notes that markets tend to obscure the social relationships and processes of production, a phenomenon he termed commodity fetishism. People are highly aware of commodities, and usually don't think about the relationships and labour they represent.

In his critique of Hegel, Marx examined the emergence of the state in modern times. The separation between civil society and the state, he argued, was a modern phenomenon reinforced by capitalism. Although Easton credited Marx with this sight, Easton himself influenced and set in motion the movement in political science to discard the state as a concept, replacing it with political system. The Marxist understanding of state had also been denuded of its significance by the attention of German positivist political scientists who emphasized the legal and constitutional aspects of the state and influenced the early U.S. political scientists. In his political and economic studies, Marx discovered this conception of the state, early in the 1840s, embarrassed by his ignorance on economic questions; Marx shifted his attention from jurisprudence to material interests. In 1845–1846 Marx and Engels related their conception of the state to the productive base of society through successive periods of history. They examined the interests of the individual, in individual family, and the communal interests of all individuals. Division of labour and private property tend to promote contradictions between individual and community interests so that the latter takes on an independent form as the state separates from the real interests of individual and community. In showing this separation of state from society, Marx and Engels argued that we should not look for categories in every period of history; that would be idealistic. Instead we must be able to explain the formation of ideas from material practice; we should examine the whole or the totality of interrelationships between material production and the state along with its forms of consciousness, religion, and the like.

NOTES

Marx and Engels are quoted to show that in this early period they had worked out a conception of base and superstructure that Marx later delineated in 1859. Accordingly, the base of economic structure of society becomes the real foundation on which people enter, into essential relations over which they exercise little control. In contrast, the legal and political superstructure is a reflection of that base, and changes in the economic foundation bring about transformations in the superstructure. The famous passage in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, in which this conception of base and superstructure is depicted, has been attacked as determinist, dogmatic and static. Admittedly Marx's synthesis of his own perspective appears to reduce societal relationships to a dichotomy of categories and to simplistic formulations. Yet one also finds in this passage the essential concepts of Marxism as well as departure point for comprehending the relationship of politics and economics.

Marxist thought is holistic, broadly ranged, unified and interdisciplinary in contrast to ahistorical, compartmentalised, and often narrow parameters of the mainstream paradigm. Marx believed that dialectics should be combined with a materialist, not an idealist, view of history. Hegel's dialectic was idealist and mystical and was set forth rigidly as a system. Marx's dialectic was intended to be a flexible method of analysis, not a dogma or a complete and closed system. Dialectics allows for the building of theory upon new facts as well as for the interpreting of facts in relation to new theory. Dialectics does not need to be intended as a set of universal laws that solve all problems and relate to all knowledge of past and present history. There is no precise formula for dialectical inquiry, but some guidelines might be employed. Marxist methodology includes a plethora of concepts. Necessary production, for example, satisfies the basic human needs for food, drink, and so on. Surplus production evolved with intentions and new knowledge that made possible increases in the productivity of labour. Surplus production led to the division and specialisation of labour. Changes in the forces of production affected relations of production so that revolution and class struggle became possible at certain junctures of history.

Marx used dialectics, a method that he adapted from the works of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Dialectics focuses on relation and change, and tries to avoid seeing the universe as composed of separate objects, each with essentially stable unchanging characteristics. One component of dialectics is abstraction; out of an undifferentiated mass of data or system conceived of as an organic whole, one abstracts portions to think about or to refer to. One may abstract objects, but also—and more typically—relations, and processes of change. An abstraction may be extensive or narrow, may focus on generalities or specifics, and may be made from various points of view. For example, a sale may be abstracted from a buyer's or a seller's point of view and one may abstract a particular sale or sales in general. Another component is the dialectical deduction of categories. Marx uses Hegel's notion of *categories*, which are *forms*, for economics: The commodity *form*, the money *form*, the capital *form* etc. have to be systematically deduced instead of being grasped in an outward way as done by the bourgeois economists. This corresponds to Hegel's critique of Kant's transcendental philosophy.

Marx regarded history as having passed through several stages. The details of his periodisation vary somewhat through his works, but it essentially is: primitive communism—slave societies—feudalism—capitalism—socialism—communism (capitalism being the present stage and communism the future). Marx occupied himself primarily with describing capitalism. Historians place the beginning of capitalism sometime between about 1450 (Sombart) and sometime in the 17th century (Hobsbawm). A distinguishing

NOTES

feature of capitalism is that most of the products of human labour are produced for sale, rather than consumed by the producers or appropriated, essentially by force, by ruling elite as in feudalism or slavery. (For example in feudalism, most agricultural produce was either consumed by the peasants who grew it, or appropriated by feudal masters. It almost never was sold for money.) Marx defines a commodity as a product of human labour that is produced for sale in a market. Thus in capitalism, most of the products of human labour are commodities. Marx began his major work on economics, *Capital*, with a discussion of commodities; Chapter one is called 'Commodities'.

Marx transcended the theory of the utopian socialists as well as the classical liberal thinkers. He worked out a theory of surplus value as well as a synthesis that allowed for an explanation of class struggle. He developed theories on the prices of production and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. He set forth basic laws of development: 'through his working out of a theory of the reproduction of capital and of national income, and through his adumbration of a theory of crises, he simultaneously achieved a first practical synthesis of micro-economic and macro-economic ideas'. Marx's early work attacked the utopian socialists, and his later work concentrated on all his predecessors, but in particular on the classical liberal economists Ricardo and Smith, for example, in the Poverty of Philosophy Marx exposed the 'metaphysics' of Proudhon's political economy, and he argued against the use of 'fixed immutable eternal categories'. Instead, one should examine 'the historical movement of production relations', not their theoretical expression as categories nor as spontaneous or abstract ideas. In addition, he insisted that the production relations of every society form a whole; the parts cannot be separated from the whole so that one can explain society in terms of all relations simultaneously coexisting and supporting one another.

Marx examined commodities and money, noting differences in use and exchange values. He looked at the circulation of commodities and capital, the transformation of money into capital, labour power and surplus value, and the process of capitalist production as whole. The last sections of the first volume of capital concern primitive accumulation and the accumulation capital. Marx described the process by which money and commodities transform into capital and in which the owner of money and means of production confront workers.

Primitive communal production, in which labour collectively participates in and owns the means of production and in which there is no exploitation of classes, had disappeared long before. Slavery, in which the owner of the means of production owns the worker and in which accumulation wealth falls into the hands of a few, also had been largely overcome. However, competitive capitalism grew out of feudalism, in which the feudal lord owns the means of production but does not fully own the worker. Alongside feudal ownership there was some private property in the hands of peasants and artisans whose ownership was based on personal labour. Marx described how capitalist accumulation disrupted those relations of production as large mills and factories replaced handicraft shops and large farms with machinery took the place of the old feudal estates and peasant farms.

For Marx, there are no eternal economic laws, valid in every epoch of human prehistory and history. Each mode of production has its own specific economic laws, which lose their relevance once the general social framework has fundamentally changed. For Marx likewise, there are no economic laws separate and apart from specific relations between human beings, in the primary social relations of production. All attempts to reduce economic problems to purely material, objective ones, to relations between things,

NOTES

or between things and human beings, would be considered by Marx as manifestations of mystification, of false consciousness, expressing itself through the attempted relocation of human relations. Behind relations between things, economic science should try to discover the specific relations between human beings which they hide. Real economic science has therefore also a demystifying function compared to vulgar 'economics', which takes a certain number of 'things' for granted without asking the questions: Are they really only what they appear to be? From where do they originate? What explains these appearances? What lies behind them? Where do they lead? How could they (will they) disappear? Problemblindheit, the refusal to see that facts are generally more problematic than they appear at first sight, is certainly not a reproach one could address to Marx's economic thought.

Marx's economic analysis is therefore characterized by a strong ground current of historical relativism, with a strong recourse to the genetical and evolutionary method of thinking (that is why the parallel with Darwin has often been made, sometimes in an excessive way). The formula 'genetic structuralism' has also been used in relation to Marx's general approach to economic analysis. Be that as it may, one could state that Marx's economic theory is essentially geared to the discovery of specific 'laws of motion' for successive modes of production. While his theoretical effort has been mainly centered around the discovery of these laws of motion for capitalist society, his work contains indications of such laws–different ones, to be sure for pre-capitalist and post-capitalist social formations too.

The main link between Marx's sociology and anthropology on the one hand, and his economic analysis on the other, lies in the key role of social labour as the basic anthropological feature underlying all forms of social organisation. Social labour can be organised in quite different forms, thereby giving rise to quite different economic phenomena ('facts'). Basically different forms of social labour organisation lead to basically different sets of economic institutions and dynamics, following basically different logics (obeying basically different 'laws of motion').

All human societies must assure the satisfaction of a certain number of basic needs, in order to survive and reproduce themselves. This leads to the necessity of establishing some sort of equilibrium between social recognised needs, i.e. current consumption and current production. But this abstract banality does not tell us anything about the concrete way in which social labour is organised in order to achieve that goal.

Society can recognise all individual labour as immediately social labour. Indeed, it does so in innumerable primitive tribal and village communities, as it does in the contemporary kibbutz. Directly social labour can be organised in a despotic or in a democratic way, through custom and superstition as well as through an attempt at applying advanced science to economic organisation; but it will always be immediately recognised social labour, inasmuch as it is based upon a priori assignment of the producers to their specific work (again: irrespective of the form this assignation takes, whether it is voluntary or compulsory, despotic or simply through custom etc.).

But when social decision-taking about work assignation (and resource allocation closely tied to it) is fragmented into different units operating independently from each other–as a result of private control (property) of the means of production, in the economic and not necessarily the juridical sense of the word–then social labour in turn is fragmented into private labours which are not automatically recognised as socially necessary ones (whose expenditure is not automatically compensated by society). Then the private producers have to exchange parts or all of their products in order to satisfy some or all

NOTES

of their basic needs. Then these products become commodities, the economy becomes a (partial or generalised) market economy. Only by measuring the results of the sale of his products can the producer (or owner) ascertain what part of his private labour expenditure has been recognized (compensated) as social labour, and what part has not.

Even if we operate with such simple analytical tools as 'directly social labour', 'private labour', 'socially recognised social labour', we have to make quite an effort at abstracting from immediately apparent phenomena in order to understand their relevance for economic analysis. This is true for all scientific analysis, in natural as well as in social sciences. Marx's economic analysis, as presented in his main books, has not been extremely popular reading; but then, there are not yet so many scientists in these circumstances. This has nothing to do with any innate obscurity of the author, but rather with the nature of scientific analysis as such.

The relatively limited number of readers of Marx's economic writings (the first English paperback edition of Das Kapital appeared only in 1974) is clearly tied to Marx's scientific rigour, his effort at a systematic and all-sided analysis of the phenomena of the capitalist economy. But while his economic analysis lacked popularity, his political and historical projections became more and more influential. With the rise of independent working-class mass parties, an increasing number of these proclaimed themselves as being guided or influenced by Marx, at least in the epoch of the Second and the Third Internationals, roughly the half century from 1890 till 1940. Beginning with the Russian revolution of 1917, a growing number of governments and of states claimed to base their policies and constitutions on concepts developed by Marx. (Whether this was legitimate or not is another question.) But the fact itself testifies to Marx's great influence on contemporary social and political developments, evolutionary and revolutionary alike.

Likewise, his diffused influence on social science, including academic economic theory, goes far beyond general acceptance or even substantial knowledge of his main writings. Some key ideas of historical materialism and of economic analysis which permeate his work–e.g. that economic interests to a large extent influence, if not determine, political struggles; that historic evolution is linked to important changes in material conditions; that economic crises ('the business cycle') are unavoidable under conditions of capitalist market economy–have become near-platitudes. It is sufficient to notice how major economists and historians strongly denied their validity throughout the 19th century and at least until the 1920s, to understand how deep has been Marx's influence on contemporary social science in general.

Thus, political economy fundamentally addresses this broad historical sweep of capitalism, especially over the past hundred years. In Grundrise and Capital, Marx gave us the foundations for such study. Paul Sweezy in The Theory of Capitalist Development and Ernest Mandel in Marxist Economic Theory summarised and interpreted Marx's findings, emphasising the economic implications in particular, whereas the synthesis by Stanley W. Moore in The Critique of Capitalist Democracy focussed on the political ramifications. Duncan K. Foley and Makoto Ito are particularly instructive with their interpretation and guidance to understanding Marx's elaboration and critique of capitalism.

Mandel asked how the history of the past hundred years relates to 'the unfolding development of internal conditions' in the capitalist mode of production, to 'its combination of expanding capital and pre-capitalist spheres. He distinguished competitive and imperialist capitalism from 'late Capitalism, which has evolved since the Second World War. Mandel's Late Capitalism attempts to integrate theory and history in the tradition of Marx, dialectically moving from abstract to concrete and concrete to abstract, form

NOTES

the parts to the whole and from the whole to the parts, from essence to appearance and from appearance to essence, from totality to contradiction and contradiction to totality, from object to subject and subject to object. Although Mandel failed give us a modern version of Capital, his work is a serious holistic effort to fill a gap in political economy.

Samir Amin in *Accumulation on a World Scale* combined theory with history on a holistic level. He argued that accumulation or expanded reproduction is essential to the capitalist mode of production as well as to the socialist mode of production, but not to pre-capitalist modes of production. He insisted that analysis incorporate capitalist modes in combination with pre-capitalist modes. In fact, all modes and formations of the contemporary world reflect accumulation on a world scale. Primitive accumulation does not belong to prehistory of capitalism but is contemporary as well. Capitalist and socialist world markets are not distinguishable, for there is only one, the world capitalist market, in which socialist countries marginally participate. Furthermore, capitalism is a world system, not a mixture of national capitalisms.

Other ambitious attempts to provide a holistic overview of political economy include Perry Anderson's Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism and Lineages of the Absolute State; in them Anderson delved into questions relevant to feudalism and capitalism as Europe emerged from the Middle Ages. Immanuel Wallerstein in *The Modern World-System* dated the modern world system from the sixteenth century but saw four periods in its evolution: origins (1450–1640), Mercantile consolidation (1640–1815), industrial expansion (1815–1917), and the contemporary capitalist world (1917–present). Wallerstein elaborated and refined Andre Gunder Frank's theory of capitalist development of underdevelopment and emphasised market relations. Robert Brenner took both thinkers to task for locating their analysis of the origins of capitalism in market processes identified in the work of Adam Smith.

Four thinkers–Mandel, Amin, Anderson, and Wallertein–among others have rekindled an interest in the history of political economy. However imperfect their work may be, it orients us toward old and new questions neglected by some of the contemporary work in economics and political science. All four drew heavily on foundation of Marxist thought. Their work also helps to transcend some of the problems found in many theories of development and underdevelopment. Underdevelopment cannot be understood in isolation from development. Both development and underdevelopment are unified and integrated into the world capitalist system accumulation

4.3.1 Structuralist

The fundamental thesis of this structuralist perspective is that the functions of the state are broadly determined by the structures of the society rather than by the people who occupy positions of state power. Opposite to instrumentalism, those who advocate the structuralist perspective examine the constraints and contradictions of capitalism within the structure in which the state is embedded. This structure, rather than a struggle by individuals, classes, and the like, is of central concern. Althusser provided a foundation and Nicos Poulantzas elaborated a political side of this structuralism. He argued that the bourgeoisie is unable as a class to dominate the state, that the state itself organises and unifies the interest of this class. The economic side of a structuralist approach is exemplified by the work of Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy. They stressed the activity of the state in resolving economic contradictions and averting crises related to monopoly capitalism. Critics of the structuralist perspective argue that it cannot explain class action that arises from class consciousness.

NOTES

The origins of structuralism have been traced to Marx and the French anthropologist Claude, Levi-Strauss. Within the structural school political and economic currents are evident. Political structuralist like Althusser and Poulantzas focus on state mechanism of repression and ecology and the way they provide and ordered structure of capitalism. This political structuralism contrast with the economic structuralist approach, examples of which are found in the writings of Paul Baran, Sweezy and O'Connor. In edition there is the effort to develop a class analysis of world economy introduced by Wallerstein.

Structural Marxism arose in opposition to the humanistic Marxism that dominated many western universities during the 1970s. In contrast to Humanistic Marxism, Althusser stressed that Marxism was a science that examined objective structures, and he believed that humanistic, historistic and phenomenological Marxism, which was based on Marx's early works, was caught in a 'pre-scientific humanistic ideology'.

Toward the middle of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, Marxist theorists began to develop structuralist Marxist accounts of the state, law, and crime. Structuralist Marxism disputes the instrumentalist view that the state can be viewed as the direct servant of the capitalist or ruling class. Whereas the instrumentalist position argues that the institutions of the state are under the direct control of those members of the capitalist class in positions of state power, the structuralist perspective takes the position that the institutions of the state must function in such a way as to ensure ongoing viability of capitalism more generally. Another way that Marxists put this is that the institutions of the state must function so as to reproduce capitalist society as a whole.

Structuralists view the state in a capitalist mode of production as taking a specifically capitalist form, not because particular individuals are in powerful positions, but because the state reproduces the logic of capitalist structure in its economic, legal, and political institutions. Hence, from a structuralist perspective one would argue that the institutions of the state (including its legal institutions) function in the long-term interests of capital and capitalism, rather than in the short term interests of members of the capitalist class. Structuralists would thus argue that the state and its institutions have a certain degree of independence from specific elites in the ruling or capitalist class.

In an essay on structure and the contradictions of Capitalism analysed in Marx, Maurice Godelier outlined the proximity of structuralism and Marxism. Marx, he claimed, described social life in terms of structure by reference to infrastructure and super structure. Marx also offered a scientific understanding of the capitalist system by discovering 'the internal structures hidden behind its visible functioning'. Godelier believed that Marx initiated the modern structuralist condition; he carefully distinguished this tradition from the US and British belief in empirical social science in which a structure must be directly visible.

Levi Strauss's work represents a significant theoretical contribution to contemporary anthropology and although it is not Marxist it has been incorporated into a Marxist model. Jonathan Friedman analysed similarities in the thought of Marx and Levi Strauss and concluded that although work such as Levi Strauss's *Les Structures Elementaries de la Parente and* Marx *Capital* are different, 'they both attempt to explore reality in terms of what are conceived of as fundamental underlying relations'.

The concept of political structuralism is found in the works of Gramsci, Althusser and Poulantzas. Gramsci's main ideas are found in his book *Prison Notebook* and *Selections from Political Writings* (1910-1920). Gramsci's note on the state provides one basis for structuralist thought and has influenced Althusser and Poulantzas. Gramsci directed us toward a Marxist theory of politics. His emphasis on hegemony or dominance

NOTES

of some social group or class in power has promoted some critics to suggest he was advocating reformist interpretations or undialectically separating politics from economics. Gramsci tended to utilize categories of analysis, for example, in distinguishing between state and civil society, as did Hegel and Marx, in his early work. Gramsci's conception of state is varied, however, Crises occur in the hegemony of the ruling class because it fails in some political undertaking and the masses become discontented and actively resistant. Such a crisis of hegemony is a crisis of authority or crisis of the state. Under such conditions a ruling class may seize control and retain power by crushing its adversaries. Gramsci examined this activity in terms of the experiences of Italy and other nations in Europe. He seemed to be agreeing with the structuralist position that the activities of the state are determined by the structures of society rather than by persons in positions of state power.

The fact that the state or government, conceived as an autonomous force, should reflect back its prestige upon the class upon which it is based, is of the greatest practical and theoretical importance, and deserves to be analysed fully if one wants a more realistic concept of the state itself . . . It can, it seems, be incorporated into the function of elites on vanguards, i.e. of parties, in relation to the class which they represent. This class, often, as an economic fact . . . might not enjoy any intellectual or moral prestige, i.e. might be incapable of establishing its hegemony, hence of founding a state.

There are scattered references to Gramsci on the work of French structuralist Louis Althusser. For example, in *For Marx* (1970), Althusser commented, 'The jottings and developments in his *Prison Notebooks* touch on all the basic problems of Italian and European history: economic, social, political and cultural. There are also some completely original and in some cases general insights into the problem, basic today, of superstructure. Also, as always with true discoveries, there are new concepts, for example, hegemony; a remarkable example of a theoretical solutions in outline to the problem of the interpretation of the economic and political'. Althusser's major works in English, in addition to *For Marx*, include *Reading capital, Lenin and philosophy and Other Essays* (1971), and *Politics and History: Montesque, Rousseau, Hegel and Marx* (1972). Althusser's thought was shaped by an attack on Marxist humanists and by an effort to sharply distinguish the humanist ideas in Marx's early writing from the structuralist formations found in the later writings. Marx poster (1974) characterised Althusser's structuralism as 'an escape from ideology into science', and 'a theoretically more sophisticated Marxism that could analyse various segments of society without reducing them all to the economy'.

In his essay on ideology and the state, Althusser sketched Marx representation of the structure of every society in terms of levels: infrastructure or economic base composed of productive forces and relations of production, on the one hand, and superstructure composed of political-legal and ideological aspects, on the other hand. Althusser referred to this representation as a representation as a spatial metaphor, that is, it remains descriptive, and he set forth a different formulations. Following Marx he conceived of the state as a repressive apparatus that permits the ruling classes to dominate over and exploit the working class. This apparatus include the bureaucracy police, courts, prisons and the army, which intervenes in times of crisis. The state then is a force of repression and intervention that shields the bourgeoisie and its allies in the class struggle against the proletariat. Indeed the whole of the political class struggle revolves around the state. The objective of the class struggle concerns state power, for the proletariat must seize state power, destroy the bourgeois state apparatus, replace it with a proletarian state apparatus, and then in the end destroy the state itself.

NOTES

Althusser thus distinguished between state power and repressive state apparatus, and he identified the structural elements of this state apparatus. In conjunction with the repressive state apparatus he alluded to a plurality of ideological state apparatuses, which appear to the observer in the form of distinct and specialised institutions, including the religious system of churches, schools, family, political parties, trade unions, communications and cultural enterprises. These ideological state apparatuses, which are public. The former function predominantly by ideology; the letter, by violence. Such diversity should not distinguish the real unity of the ruling class, which hold state power and may utilize both the repressive and ideological state apparatuses. These conditions ensure the reproduction of relations of production through historical periods.

Nicos Poulantzas elaborated an Althusserian struturalist model of the state and class. In line with the French structuralist perspective, Poulantzas believed that the structures of society rather than influential people generally determine the functions of the state. He examined the structure of class in society in order to identify the contradictions in the economy and to analyse how the state attempts to mitigate or eliminate those contradictions. Poulantzas' theory of the capitalist state was introduced in his *Political Power and Social Classes* (1973). Other contributions include his *Fascism and Dictatorship* (1974) and *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (1975). Although Poulantzas' writings have been received with interest if not acclaim, it is clear that English and U.S. critics recognise their contribution to a Marxist theory of politics, especially in conceptualisations of state, class, and power. His work, however, suffers from an abundance of formal terminology, abstraction, and failure to elucidate and explicate many terms. The writing is obscure and often reluctant. Despite these limitations, some essential aspects of his thought are summarised below.

In *Political Power and Social Classes*, Poulantzas offered a theory that relates to the functions of the capitalist state and to the impact of the state on the capitalist and working classes. The state functions in several ways to reproduce the capitalist society as a whole. The state maintains cohesion and equilibrium on behalf of the political interests of dominant class. The state characterises all social relations as competitive so that workers and capitalist owners appear to be free and equal, thereby isolating them as individuals and obscuring their division into classes. Second, the state attempts to represent itself on behalf of the 'unity' of the mass of isolated individuals as if a class struggle could not exist. Third, the state functions to allow classes to organise their own parties, which left to themselves promote internal contradiction and fractionalisations, resulting in struggles with in the working class and disunity within the bourgeoisie so that it is unable to rise to hegemonic domination as a united class. Thus the structure of the state permits the working class to organise and place demands on the state in ways that may conflict with the economic interests of the dominant classes. This demonstrates that the state is not simply the instrument of the dominating classes. Instead the state through its relative autonomy is able to ensure the stability of the interests of the dominating capitalist classes. The state structures stands above the special interests of individual capitalists and capitalist class fractions.

In his *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, Poulantzas systematically examined classes in capitalist society. This work has been digested by Erik Olin Wright (1976), who identified three basic premises. First, classes are defined in terms of class practices as reflected in antagonistic social relations, division of labour, these positions representing the structured determination of class. Third, classes are structured at economic, political and ideological levels. Poulantzas argued that a new petty bourgeoisie of white-collar employees, technicians, and civil servants has arisen as the traditional petty bourgeoisie

NOTES

of artisans and small shopkeepers has declined. He analysed the relationship of this new petty bourgeoisie to the working class, distinguishing between productive and unproductive labour. He also looked at the economic ownership and control that the bourgeoisie has over the means of production. Wright attacked this distinction between this productive and unproductive labour and argued further that Poulantzas' use of political and ideological criteria undermines the primacy of economic relations in determining class position. He also questioned Poulantzas' insistence that the traditional and new petty bourgeoisie are of the same class.

Other criticisms of Poulantzas abound. Although acknowledging that Althusser and Poulantzas seek to rescue Marxism from empiricists, idealist, and historicist tendencies, Dale Johnson (1978) concluded that structuralism 'is seriously pressed interest in the' Weberian-sounding conception of the three-dimensional sort of new middle class. Finally, he indicated structuralism for its static formalism of functionalism in which the Marxist concept of reproduction becomes transformed into an almost parsonian preoccupation with 'system maintenance'. Gold, Lo, and Wright (1975) were concerned with the failure of Poulantzas to explain the social mechanisms that guarantee that the state will function autonomously to protect the interests of the dominant class. Amy Bridges argued that Poulantzas was anti-materialist, anti-humanist, a historical, and descriptive in his view of the state as a dual structure that is both cohesive and transforming. Ernesto Laclau condemned Poulantzas for theoreticism and formalism, which result in a neglect of concrete analysis. In admitting the validity of some of these criticisms, Poulantzas retorted with his own criticism and self-criticism. In this process he rebutted Miliband's charges and argued that the debate between them was based on false misleading premises.

In a 1971 paper for *Socialist Register*, Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski undertook a detailed critique of structural Marxism, arguing that the concept was seriously flawed on three main points:

> 'I will argue that the whole of Althusser's theory is made up of the following elements: 1. common sense banalities expressed with the help of unnecessarily complicated neologisms; 2. traditional Marxist concepts that are vague and ambiguous in Marx himself (or in Engels) and which remain, after Althusser's explanation, exactly as vague and ambiguous as they were before; 3. some striking historical inexactitudes'.

Kolakowski further argued that, despite Althusser's claims of scientific rigor, structural Marxism was unfalsifiable and thus unscientific, and was best understood as a quasi-religious ideology. In 1980, sociologist Axel van der Berg described Kolakowski's critique as 'devastating', proving that 'Althusser retains the orthodox radical rhetoric by simply severing all connections with verifiable facts'.

4.3.2 The New Structuralism

Some scholars prefer not to be labelled with the theoretical legacy of structuralism. Nevertheless, the discourse and theoretical categories of structuralism (social formation, modes of production, and over determination, to name just a few) are pervasive in contemporary Marxian literature. The new structural Marxism embodies diverse and often contradictory theories and strives to transcend the limitations of rigid theoretical formulations, reductionism, and intransigent policy, yet it incorporates and explicitly structural framework. In their *Knowledge and Class*, Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff illustrated these concerns. In their 1982 review of Marx's theory of class they emphasized the class process of extracting surplus labour through different forms ranging

NOTES

from primitive communist, ancient, feudal, slave, and capitalist and they distinguished between fundamental classes and subsumed classes. They identified examples of subsumed classes in Marx's writings–merchants, money lenders, and supervisory managers of joint–stock companies–and delineated Marx's explanation of how these classes produced neither value nor surplus value; this analysis led them to a distinction of productive and unproductive labour. Drawing from Althusser and Marx, Resnick and Wolff employed the term over determination to suggest that: each process has no existence other than as the site of the converging influences exerted by all the other social processed. Of each process it can be said that all the other process that combine to over determine it are its conditions of existence . . . the class process is a condition of existence of each and every other social process.

4.3.3 Economic Structuralism

In *The Theory of Capitalist Development* Paul Sweezy distinguished between a theory of class mediation and a theory of class domination. Liberal theorists advocate a class-mediation conception of the state, which assumes the existence of a certain class structure and recognises the state as the mediator of conflicting interests of various classes. Marxist theorists employ a class-domination conception of the state. As the instrument of the ruling classes the state maintains and guarantees a given set of property relations and enforces and ensures the stability of the state itself. In this view the state is and economic instrument within capitalism. Specifically the state may act to solve particular crises of capitalism, it may be used on behalf of the interests of the bourgeoisie, and it may serve to blunt class antagonisms and revolution by providing concessions to the working class. Sweezy, whose criticism of power-structure research alluded to Marxist theory, which had largely been ignored. His perspective of the state as an economic instrument of the ruling classes also accounted for the constraints of bourgeois democracy. Democracy, he argued, brings the contradictions and conflicts of capitalist society into the open so that capitalists may not freely use the state in their own interests.

This perception of state response to economic contradictions also reflects a view of economic structuralism. In this view political influences on economic policy are considered to be of secondary importance. In *Monopoly Capital,* Sweezy and Baran combined instrumentalist and structuralist analysis. Baran and Sweezy focused on how the state facilitates the process of surplus absorption. The state acts to avert crises of monopoly capitalism, there by guaranteeing absorption of surplus.

James O'Connor in *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, expanded on this view by arguing that the state is a complex structure of authority relations and itself to possesses some autonomy. O'Connor did not see the state as merely an instrument for the ruling class or even specific segments of that class. O'Connor argued that the state does not produce but instead appropriates surplus to enhance the conditions requisite for capital accumulation. The state shapes the conditions for monopoly and competitive capitalism. Although the monopoly sector constantly reproduces as the conditions for the competitive sector, competitive capitalism occupies a subordinate role to monopoly capitalism, which is the driving force in the productive process.

Somewhat related to economic structuralism is the work of Immanuel Wallerstein on class in the capitalist world economy. His argument runs as follows. Class is a concept historically linked to the capitalist world economy or the modern world system. This world system consists of three basic elements: a single market, a series of state structures or nations that affect the workings of the market, and three levels (core, semi periphery,

NOTES

and periphery) in an exploitative process involving the appropriation of surplus labour. Class struggle emanates from the relationship among these levels. Those on top always seek to ensure the existence of three tiers in order the better to preserve their privilege, whereas those on the bottom conversely seek to reduce the tree to two, the better to destroy this same privilege. This fight over the existence of the middle tier goes on continually, both in political terms and in terms of basic ideological constructs. In this struggle classes are formed, consolidated, disintegrated, and reformulated as capitalism evolves and develops. This changing struggle is located in the capitalist world economy. Wallerstein expanded a conception of centre and periphery that originated with the Argentine economist Raul Prebisch and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America. He came close to the formulations of the unequal development thesis of Samir Amin who, however, attempted to give weight to productive process of capitalism as well as the market. Wallerstein also attempted to move beyond a conception of class within nations, thereby escaping some of the problems in a class analysis of internal colonialism, such as advocated by Mexican political sociologist Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, or the attention to national bourgeoisie found in writings by Marxists and non-Marxists alike.

Terence K. Hopkins clarified and elaborated on this formulation of class to the capitalist world economy. He argued that Wallerstein provided a theory of the global capitalist economy as a world system, not a theory of the development of national economies or of an international economy. Hopkins believed that with the evolution of this world system there has been the establishment of an organised world capitalist class in contrast to alliances among national bourgeoisies. A parallel development has been the formation of an international movement of labor through the organisation of a worldwide labour market. The multinational corporations have proved effective in organising this world system along such class lines.

This imaginative yet somewhat ecletic theory of Wallerstein has been widely criticised for its attention to market rather than to production as basis of analysing class relations in the contemporary capitalist world. However, Wallerstein concern with structure transcended national state boundaries and attempted to explore the roots of the world capitalist economy. Wallerstin elaborated and recast dimensions of the dependency theory and thus has influenced may mainstream social scientists to alter their perspectives of development, state, and class.

4.3.4 Criticism of Structuralist Theory

In fact both the structuralist and the instrumentalist perspectives are criticised in terms of systemic inputs and outputs. Instrumentalists tend to relate analysis to contemporary class activity rather than to historically known constraints of the system. Structuralist tends to downplay class activity.

A major problem of structuralist theory is that it does little to explain class action arising from class consciousness, a concern of Marx, especially in his early works, and of the critical school. Esping, Andersen, Friedland and Wright deplored a lack of theory that ties political inputs and constraints to outputs of state activity; neither structuralist nor instrumentalist theory solves this problem. John Mollenkopf believed that structuralists have offered useful critiques of instrumentalism, which studies of power structure exemplify. At the same time both economic and political structuralism remains inadequate. First, economic structuralism limits the state to a superficial conception, to a kind of systemic checklist. It assigns solely economic, rather than political motives to the state in the face of substantial evidence to the contrary. It also projects an economistic

'inevitability' for crises which politics should not be able to allay, but somehow does. Second, political instrumentalists such as Poulantzas focus on the ideological and repressive institutions that sustain capitalism. This emphasis on the political aspects of structuralism leads to what Miliband called structuralist 'abstractionism' or 'super determination'. The state becomes an all pervasive political/ideological realm shorn of institutional location, visible boundaries, or even political struggle. The structuralist work tends to be highly abstract and oriented to conceptual schemes rather than theory. It permits an understanding of the workings of the capitalist state and its agencies and policies. It also allows for distinctions between class and group interests, although Molenkopf advocated work on a theory of class political action that would explain the aims and actions of late capitalism.

NOTES

4.4 NEO-MARXISTS VIEW ON DEVELOPEMENT

The development of Neo-Marxism came forth through several political and social problems which traditional Marxist thought was unable to answer. Examples to this were: Why socialist and social-democratic political parties did not band together against WWI, but instead supported their own nations entrance into the Great War. Why although the timing seemed to be right for a workers revolution in the west, no large scale revolutions occurred. Also how at this time the rise of Fascism could occur in Europe. All these questions led to internal problems within Marxist theory which caused renewed study and reanalysis of Marx's works to begin. There is no formal Neo-Marxist organization and seldom do people call themselves Neo-Marxists, so it is difficult to describe who belongs to this movement. Also there is no set definition as to what a Neo-Marxist is, which makes grouping and categorizing this idea even more difficult.

One idea that many 'branches' of Neo-Marxism share is the desire to move away from the idea of a bloody revolution to one of a more peaceful nature, moving away from the violence of the red revolutions of the past while keeping the revolutionary message. Neo-Marxist concepts can also follow an economic theory that attempts to move away from the traditional accusations of class warfare and create new economic theory models, such as Hans Jurgen Krahl did. Several important advances to Neo-Marxism came after World War I from Georg Lukács, Karl Korsch and Antonio Gramsci. From the Institute of Social Research founded in 1923 at the University of Frankfurt am Main, grew one of the most important schools of neo-Marxist interdisciplinary social theory, The Frankfurt School. Its founders Max Horkheimer und Theodor W. Adorno whose critical theories had great influence on Marxist theory especially after their exile to New York after the rise of National Socialism in 1933.

Neo-Marxists have given their own view on development. When it comes to deciding appropriate path of development for the present day developing countries, Marxist and New-Marxist writers have argued that capitalist path will not suit them. The situation prevailing in these countries is basically different from that where the Western countries started their development. Thus Paul Baran (*The Political Economy of Growth*; 1957) observed that the advanced capitalist countries of today had managed accumulation of capital by exploiting their colonial territories. The present day developing countries have no access to such resources. Capitalists of the developing countries are incapable of developing the forces of production. Hence, capitalist path would hardly promote their progress.

Check Your Progress

3. How does Webster's dictionary identify political economy in the 18th century?
4. What is dialectics?

NOTES

In *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, 1967, Andre G. Frank argued that national capitalism and the national bourgeoisie, unlike their counterparts in England and the United States, cannot promote development in Latin America. In the Western countries capitalism played a different role because it was rooted in imperialism. Frank advanced a centre-periphery model to elucidate the role of imperialism. He likened metropolis to centre and satellite to periphery. They are linked in such a way that the development of the centre leads to corresponding underdevelopment in the periphery. This relationship continued even when satellites had gained political independence. Frank suggested that in order to stop underdevelopment of the new nations, they should be de-linked from the capitalist economies. Walter Rodney in his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 1974 and B. Cumings in *The Origins of Development of the Northeast Asian political Economy*, 1984, confirmed Frank's conclusions in the context of Africa and Asia respectively. Similarly, Samir Amin in his book *Accumulation on a World Scale : A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment*, 1974 argued that the industrialised countries and the less developed countries are integrated in a manner which inhibits capitalism from performing its historical role of developing the productive forces in the underdeveloped countries. Amin also confirmed Frank's conclusions in the context of Africa. Thus most Marxist and Neo-Marxist scholars have advanced 'dependency theory' in order to explain the phenomenon of underdevelopment. In a nutshell, the exponents of the dependency theory argued that third world countries had remained underdeveloped because their social and economic development was being conditioned by external forces. Historically, these countries had remained colonies of the advanced capitalist nations; their looting and plunder by the metropolitan countries was the initial cause of their underdevelopment. In fact, industrial growth of the first world was largely secured by the blatant exploitation of the material as well as human resources of the present-day third world countries. After the liquidation of colonialism, the advanced countries are continuing the process of exploitation of the third world through 'Unequal exchange' in the international trade. This explanation marks a departure from the conventional Marxist position which sought to explain the phenomenon of domination and exploitation in terms of forces and relations of production. The principal tenet of the neo-Marxist theory of underdevelopment is that underdevelopment of third world countries is not a stage on the road to capitalism; it is a condition or symptom of their domination by the capitalist world. Advanced industrial societies of the West have throughout been responsible for economic and political underdevelopment of the third work. Under the present day conditions underdeveloped societies are still economically dependent on the export of primary products, various raw materials and agricultural products. The markets for these products are controlled by the capitalist economies; hence they are beyond the control of producing countries. Again, industrially advanced countries invest their capital in the former colonies and use them as suppliers of raw materials and labour at throw-away prices and as potential markets for manufactured goods at the market prices. Thus, the former metropolitan countries continue to reap economic profits as earlier without incurring the political costs of colonialism.

The neo-Marxist views on development which is also called Dependency Theory is an answer to the problem of neo-colonial exploitation of third world countries. However, answers must also be found to other social, economic and political problems of these countries. Developing nations will have to adopt a concerted approach for solving their common problems. The developing countries can exemplify a blend of material and spiritual values to solve the global problems afflicting all humanity.

Check Your Progress

5. What caused the development of Neo-Marxism?
6. What is the principal tenet of the neo-Marxist theory of underdevelopment?

4.5 ANALYSIS OF MODE OF PRODUCTION–KEY DEBATE

NOTES

What is specific about the 'capitalist mode of production' is that most of the inputs and outputs of production are supplied commercially through the market (i.e. they are commodities). This has the important consequence that the whole organization of the production process is reshaped and reorganized in line with the economic rationality of capitalism, which is expressed in price relationships between inputs and outputs (costs, sales, profits, incomes).That is, the whole process is organized and reshaped in order to conform to 'commercial logic'. Another way of saying this is that capital accumulation becomes the driving motive for production.

In this context, Marx refers to a transition from the 'formal consumption' of production under the power of capital to the 'real consumption' of production under the power of capital. In what he calls the 'specifically capitalist mode of production', both the technology worked with and the social organization of labour have been completely refashioned and reshaped in a commercial (profit and market-oriented) way; the 'old ways of producing' (for example, crafts and cottage industries) have been completely displaced by modern industrialism.

In general, capitalism as an economic system and mode of production can be summarized by the following:

- Capital accumulation: Production for profit and the need for producers to accumulate capital in order to produce.
- Commodity production: Production for exchange on a market; to maximize exchange-value instead of use-value.
- Private ownership of the means of production (MoP): Ownership of the MoP by a class of capital owners, either individually, collectively (see: Corporation) or through a state that serves the interests of the capitalist class (see: State capitalism).
- Primacy of Wage labour: The dependence on wages or salaries by a majority of the population who are coerced into work by the social conditions fostered by capitalism, and then exploited by the capitalist owners of the means of production.

A 'mode of production' (in German: *Produktionsweise*) means simply 'the distinctive way of producing', which could be defined in terms of how it is socially organized and what kinds of technologies and tools are used. Under the capitalist mode of production: (i) both the inputs and outputs of production are mainly privately owned, priced goods and services purchased in the market; (ii) production is carried out for exchange and circulation in the market; (iii) the owners of the means of production (capitalists) are the dominant class (bourgeoisie) who derive their income from the surplus product; (iv) A defining feature of capitalism is the dependency on wage-labour for a large segment of the population; specifically, the working class (proletariat) do not own capital and must live by selling their labour power in exchange for a wage.

Marx was a materialist who held that to understand any society we must examine the way in which it organises production. According to Marx, this depends on two things: (a) The forces of production–land, raw materials, technology, skills and knowledge; and (b) the social relations of production–who controls the forces of production and how. Marx argues that (a) and (b) are related–given a certain level of development of the forces of production, only certain relations of production are possible. It is also possible

NOTES

for the forces and relations of production to come into conflict. The forces of production may change in such way that the relations of production begin to hold them back, stunting their further development. Or, the relations of production may evolve to the point where they become incomparable with the existing forces of production.

The relations of production define the class structure of society. For most of human history, societies have been sharply divided into different classes, with those at the top controlling most of the wealth and those at the bottom doing most of the work that produces the wealth. This exploitative relationship is the basis of social conflict. In slave societies, slave holders control the wealth while slaves do the work. In feudal societies, lords don't own peasants but they are legally entitled to most of the wealth that peasants produce. Despite the fact that under modern capitalism slavery is illegal and there are no longer laws determining the place of individuals with in societies, according to Marx we still live in a class society in which capitalist (bourgeoisie) control most of the wealth and that workers (the proletariat) produce. Marx argues that capitalism is not based on exchange between equals. To avoid poverty, workers are forced to sale their labour power to capitalist. Capitalist will only buy it if they think they get can more out of the worker that they receives in wages. So, at root, just as are slave and feudal societies, capitalism is based on exploitation. Moreover labourers work is alienating rather than rewarding.

The forces and relations of production together make up the economic base of society. According to Marx, the economic base shapes the rest of society, particularly its political and legal super structure. The class that has economic dominance also has dominance elsewhere. It controls the political state and uses its economic powers to shape societies main institutions and ideas–social, legal, religious, philosophical, artistic etc to support its interests, thus propagating an ideology that supports the status quo. Marx condemns capitalism as an exploitative and alienating system, but also as an irrational one. While capitalism has created technological wonders and greatly raises the level of production it has also created huge inequalities. In capitalist societies the economic power of the bourgeoisie undermines genuine democracy.

In Marx's critique of political economy, the capitalist mode of production is the production system of capitalist societies, which began in Europe in the 16th century, grew rapidly in Western Europe from the end of the 18th century, and later extended to most of the world. It is characterised by: the predominance of private ownership of the means of production and of labour power; distribution and exchange in a mainly market economy; and capital accumulation.

At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or–what is but 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 fetters, then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic–in short ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out . . . No social order ever disappear before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society.

NOTES

The essential elements of Marx's thinking that may be relevant to a critical discussion of state theory are ruling class, super structure and structural base, reality and ideology, material forces and relations of production, as well as mode of production that have characterised epochs of history. The state exist alongside the ruling class and manages its affairs. The structural base of found in the material forces and relations of production–the mode of production or the real foundation that determines division in labour and class. The superstructure consists of the legal and political conceptions or theories that envision society as it should be, not as it is; their ideals, abstracted from concrete historical phenomena, but such ideals perpetuate the false ideology about the world in which people live.

Marx believed that economic change can transform the superstructure of ideology, because human actions are dependent on changes in economic structure in transformations affecting the dominant mode of production. Change for Marx is a reflection of dialectical contradiction in the diverse social forces emerging from conflict. Carl Mayer described Marx's notion of dialectic as follows. First, the conflict is only a latently and potentially present and hidden by a relative harmony of interests and then it becomes actual. It continues to rise, finally reaching a point where it puts the existence of the society in question form.

Marx in his *Introduction to the Critic of Political Economy* demonstrates the dialectical method. Marx refuted the prospective of those economists who tended to treat for economic activities (production, distribution, exchange, and consumption) in isolation from each other. He began by demonstrating that production and consumption are one and the same and that is provides a means of bringing the other about. Production is thus at the same time consumption, and consumption is at the same time production. Each is simultaneously its opposite. But an intermediary movement takes place between the two at the same time. Production leads to consumption, for which it provides the material; consumption without production would have no object. But consumption also leads to production by providing for its products the subject for whom their products.

The dialectic method stimulates a continuous reassessment of theories according to new facts. It also promotes the search for a new fact and their interpretations according to new theories. According to Marx and Engels history is nothing but the succession of the separate generations, is of which exploits the material, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all presiding generations. This conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real process of production, starting out from the material production of life itself, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this mode of production . . . as the basis of all history.

Marx believed that in history human consciousness is conditioned on the dialectical interplay between human beings and material world. Accordingly, history is a continuous process of creating and satisfying human needs. Once needs are satisfied, new needs are created. Marx analysed various types of society, including those manifesting Asiatic, ancient, and feudal modes of production in a capitalist society. His theory of capitalist development is found in *Capital*: 'The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, present itself as an immense accumulation of commodities, its unit being a single commodity'.

According to Marx a commodity is an object outside us that satisfies human wants of some sort. Every commodity has a 'use value' or utility as well as 'exchange value' or the value of a product offered in exchange for other products. Marx related both of these values to labour in the production of a commodity. Labour itself is viewed

NOTES

as commodity and is exchanged on the market. The worker produce enough to cover his cost of subsistence, but whatever he produces over and beyond is surplus value. Surplus value is a source of profit and capital accumulation.

In German ideology, Marx described the ruling class as a force that rules materially over production and intellectually over ideas. According to him, 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 there by, 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 relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.

Marx never provided a complete definition of the capitalist mode of production as a short summary, although in his manuscripts he sometimes attempted one. In a sense, *Das Kapital* as a whole provides his 'definition'. Nevertheless, it is possible to summarise the essential defining characteristics of the capitalist mode of production as follows:

- The means of production (or capital goods) and the means of consumption (or consumer goods) are mainly produced for market sale; output is produced with the intention of sale in an open market; only through sale of output, can the owner of capital claim part of the surplus-product of human labour, and realize profits. Equally, the inputs of production are supplied through the market, as commodities. The prices of both inputs and outputs are mainly governed by the market laws of supply and demand (and ultimately by the law of value). In short, a capitalist must use money to fuel both the means of production and labour in order to make commodities. These commodities are then sold to the market for a profit. The profit once again becomes part of a larger amount of capital which the capitalist reinvests to make more commodities and ultimately more and more capital.
- Private ownership of the means of production (private enterprise) as effective private control and/or legally enforced ownership, with the consequence that investment and management decisions are made by private owners of capital who act autonomously from each other and, because of business secrecy and the constraints of competition, do not co-ordinate their activities according to collective, conscious planning. Enterprises are able to set their own output prices within the framework of the forces of supply and demand manifested through the market, and the development of production technology is guided by profitability criteria.
- The corollary of that is wage labour (employment) by the direct producers, who are compelled to sell their labour power because they lack access to alternative means of subsistence (other than being self-employed or employers of labour, if only they could acquire sufficient funds) and can obtain means of consumption only through market transactions. These wage earners are mostly 'free' in a double sense: they are 'freed' from ownership of productive assets, and they are free to choose their employer.
- Being carried out for market on the basis of a proliferation of fragmented decision-making processes by owners and managers of private capital, social production is mediated by competition for asset-ownership, political or economic influence, costs, sales, prices, and profits. Competition occurs between owners of capital

NOTES

for profits, assets and markets; between owners of capital and workers over wages and conditions; and between workers themselves over employment opportunities and civil rights.

- The overall aim of capitalist production, under competitive pressure, is (a) to maximise net profit income (or realise a net super profit) as much as possible, through cutting production costs, increasing sales, and monopolisation of markets and supply, (b) capital accumulation, to acquire productive and non-productive assets, and (c) to privatize both the supply of goods and services and their consumption. The larger portion of the surplus product of labour must usually be reinvested in production, since output growth and accumulation of capital mutually depend on each other.
- Out of preceding characteristics of the capitalist mode of production, the basic class structure of this mode of production society emerges: a class of owners and managers of private capital assets in industries and on the land, a class of wage and salary earners, a permanent reserve army of labour consisting of unemployed people, and various intermediate classes such as the self-employed (small business and farmers) and the 'new middle classes' (educated or skilled professionals on higher salaries).
- The finance of the capitalist state is heavily dependent on levying taxes from the population and on credit; that is, the capitalist state normally lacks any autonomous economic basis (such as state-owned industries or landholdings) that would guarantee sufficient income to sustain state activities. The capitalist state defines a legal framework for commerce, civil society and politics, which specifies public and private rights and duties, as well as legitimate property relations.
- Capitalist development, occurring on private initiative in a socially uncoordinated and unplanned way, features periodic crises of over-production (or excess capacity). This means that a critical fraction of output cannot be sold at all, or cannot be sold at prices realising the previously ruling rate of profit. The other side of over-production is the over-accumulation of productive capital: more capital is invested in production than can obtain a normal profit. The consequence is a recession (a reduced economic growth rate) or in severe cases, a depression (negative real growth, i.e. an absolute decline in output). As a corollary, mass unemployment occurs. In the history of capitalist development since 1820, there have been more than twenty of such crises; nowadays the under-utilisation of installed productive capacity is a permanent characteristic of capitalist production (average capacity utilisation rates nowadays normally range from about sixty percent to eighty five percent).

In examining particular manifestations of the capitalist mode of production in particular regions and epochs, it is of course possible to find exceptions to these main defining criteria. But the exceptions prove the rule, in the sense that over time, the exceptional circumstances tend to disappear.

Check Your Progress

7. What is specific about the capitalist mode of production?
8. How does Marx condemn capitalism?

4.6 NATURE OF STATE–THEORY OF RELATIVE AUTONOMY AND AUTHORITARIAN STATISM

A theory of state and class was never fully developed by Marx. Ralph Miliband observed that 'a Marxist theory of politics has to be constructed or reconstructed from the mass

NOTES

of variegated and fragmented material which forms the corpus of Marxism. In order to explain the interrelationship between political and economic life Marx and Engels distinguished state from society. They defined politics in terms of the power of the state, the superstructure that represents bourgeois class controlling production. According to Marx, the separation of politics from economics is an ideological distortion because politics is an integral part of political economy. The primacy of economics constitutes an important and illuminating guideline, not an analytical straitjacket. In the origin of the Family, Private Property and the state, Engels summed up Marx's early writings on the state and class and showed the significance of economic factors. In *State and Revolution*, Lenin argued that the state does not reconcile class conflict but ensures the oppression of one class by another. He argued that state power should be destroyed by a violent revolution. Class antagonisms cannot be resolved through peaceful reforms. He saw the police and standing army as 'instruments of state' power. The proletariat fights the state until bourgeois democracy is replaced by proletarian democracy. With the establishment of classless society under communism, the state disappears altogether.

Contemporary scholars have formed three traditions in Marxist thought regarding the relationship of state and class. One tradition is known as instrumentalism. Marx had said in the communist manifesto that the state executive 'is but a committee for managing the affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'. Lenin also made references to instruments of state power in his writings. Thus the state is regarded as an instrument of the dominant or ruling class. Instrumentalism focuses on the class that rules and the ties and mechanisms that link state policies with ruling class instruments. Instrumentalism has been criticised for its failure to rise above the pluralist concerns on social and political groupings rather than on classes tied to the means of production. The instrumentalist interpretation of state has been supported by Ralph Miliband and William Domhoff.

Another perspective is represented by the structuralist view of the state advocated by French Marxists which has already been elaborated elsewhere. Nicos Poulantzas elaborated a political side of this structuralism. He argued that the bourgeoisie is unable to act as a class to dominate the state. The state itself organises and unifies the interest of that class. Althusser is another advocate of structuralist perspective on state.

The economic perspective of structuralism has been emphasised by the writers like Paul Baran and Sweezy. They stress the activity of the state in resolving economic contradictions and averting crises. However structuralism is criticised as it cannot explain class action arising from class consciousness. It is also criticised that the structural analysis tends to be static and tied to inputs and outputs rather than a dynamic expression of class struggle.

Another perspective on state is called Critical perspective. It is derived from Hegel and Marx. The main advocate of the critical perspective is Herbert Marcuse and others belonging to Frankfurt school. This school is seen as defender of Hegelian reinterpretation of Marxism, very abstract and philosophical and unrelated to concrete politics. In the 1960's, Marcuse emerged as a leader of the New Left movement and exposed the mystification of the state and its ideology and inspired the American youth and students to rebel against the bourgeois state.

Different forms of state have different forms of autonomy. But all states enjoy some autonomy or independence from all classes, including the dominant classes. The relative autonomy of the state was mainly acknowledged by Marx and Engels in connection with forms of state where the executive power dominated all other elements of the state system–for instance the absolutist state, or the Bonapartist or Bismarkian

NOTES

state. Where Marx and Engels do acknowledge the relative autonomy of the state, they tend to do so in terms which sometimes exaggerate the extent of that autonomy. Later Marxist political thought, on the contrary has usually had a strong bias towards the underestimation of the states relative autonomy. Relative autonomy simply means the degree of freedom which the state has in determining hub best to serve what those who hold power conceive to be 'national interest', in which in fact involves the service of the interest of the ruling class.

More fundamentally authoritarian statism is bound up with the periodisation of capitalism into distinct stages and phases. It seems to correspond to the current phase of imperialism and monopoly capitalism in the dominant countries, in the ways that the liberal state referred to the competitive stage of capitalism and the various forms of interventionist state to the previous phases of monopoly capitalism. Authoritarian statism is thus dependent upon those structural modifications in the relations of production and the processes and social division of labour which characterise the present phase at both the world and national levels. While the economic role of the state, which is inseparable from its political content, has to constitute the guiding thread of an analysis of authoritarian statism, it is very far from providing a sufficient explanation. Authoritarian statism hinges upon those transformations in social classes, political struggles and the relationship of forces which mark the present phase at both the world and national levels.

Esping Andersen, Friedland and Wright interconnect among class struggle, state structures, and state policies. They examined ways in which the class struggle shapes the structure of the state and the ways in which the structure of the state shapes the claw struggle. They also looked at how the policies of the state shape and are shaped by demands raised in the class struggle. Specifically, they drew upon theory implicit in the work of Claus Offe and James O'Connor.

Offe examined the structure of authority in liberal capitalist societies and argued that political institutions should be analysed in class terms. First, the bourgeoisie uses its ideology to align state policy with its own interests in foreign affairs, finance, and social areas. Second, action of the state is limited to maintaining public order through the military, courts, and police, thus creating conditions for private capital accumulation. In the advanced or late capitalist society, however an all-pervasive system of mechanisms for state intervention has been established. In contrast to liberal capitalist societies in which the bourgeois state limits authority, late capitalist societies are regulated and sustained by permanent political intervention. Thus the state may assume responsibility for managing crises in the economy. Offe contended that the establishment of a welfare state implies support of the lower classes, but in fact it allows corporate business to derive far greater benefits. At the same time the state remains independent of direct class controls. Esping Andersen et al. believed that Offe's conception of autonomy and state intervention into crisis situations leads him to ignore the extent to which classes are differentially able to shape the state machinery and voice specific demands for state action.

James O'Connor's *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* deals with the relation of the internal structure of the state to contradictions in the accumulation process. He also analysed the relationship between the class struggle and the internal structure. In particular, he looked at how the class struggle limits the state's ability to rationalise capitalism and how state structures serve as barriers to the challenge of the working class. The theory implicit in Offe and O'Connor led Esping Andersen et al. to four propositions as to how state structures are shaped by class struggle. First, they saw state structures as the

NOTES

outcome of class struggle, not simply as mechanisms conceived and maintained for the reproduction of capital and the repression of the working class. Second, these structures mediate, on the one hand, demands to the state from the ruling class and, on the other, state policies that constrain the class struggle. Third, the capitalist class shapes these structures with the objective of limiting the state to intervention compatible with the needs of capital accumulation and of politically neutralising the demands of the working class. Fourth, these structures are inevitably contradictory and never totally neutralise the class struggle and incorporate the working class into an apolitical state.

Esping Andersen et al. also examined how the forms and direction of the class struggle are shaped by the state. They began with a typology of the political class struggle, which incorporates aspects of the production processes and circulation between commodities. They also considered the 'class content' 'transformations' and 'contradictions' of the political class struggle. In a critical response to Esping Andersen et al., the Capital Capitalist sate Group reaffirmed the significance of according the class struggle a central place in the historical process that shapes the state. However, they found fault with the methodology, especially the typology, used by Esping Andersen at al: 'While thought provoking, their typology appears to be static and undialectical, reproducing some of the methodological shortcomings of bourgeois social science'. Despite this reservation Esping Andersen et al pioneered the integration of class struggle into the analysis of the state. Clearly effort in this direction is needed in an attempt to transcend the various schools of theory on state and class and to find both a useful theory and a useful analysis.

4.7 SUMMARY

- Marx for the first time provided a scientific analysis of socialism.
- All earlier socialists according to Marx were utopian socialists. He analysed the human history scientifically through the use of a dialectic method.
- Political economy is a study of interconnections between economics and politics.
- According to Marx, political economy is essentially an ideology and he attempted to transcend ideology by questioning bourgeois political economy.
- The state appears because the antagonistic classes appear: these classes appear because the private ownership of means of production appears.
- The state is the result of the class society and came at a definite stage of social development. The state means public power, the legal right to use force.
- Marx projects the state as a class institution. He related his conception of state to the prevalent mode of production. With a change in the mode of production, Marx says the character of the state is also changed.
- According to Marx, it is on the economic base that politics has superstructure exists.
- The Neo-Marxist views the concept of development through a prism of dependency perspective. The concept of dependency has been widely used in comparative analysis of the third world systems particularly in Latin America.
- According to this perspective the underdevelopment of the backward areas is the product of the same historical process of capitalist development that saved the development of the progressive areas.

Check Your Progress

9. Why has structuralism been criticized by writers like Paul Baran and Sweezy?
10. What does relative autonomy mean?

NOTES

- The structuralist perspective advocated it is the structure which determines the functions of the state. There are two aspect of structuralism: political and economic.
- While Poulantzas argued that the bourgeoisie is unable to act as a class to dominate the state and the state itself organizes and unifies the interest of that class.
- The economic perspective of structuralism has been emphasized by the writers like Paul Baran and Sweezy. They stress the activity of the state in resolving economic contradictions and averting crises.
- Regarding the relative autonomy of the state, Marx and Engels observed that all other elements of the state system are dominated by the executive power.
- The Marxist perspective observes that authoritarian statism is a feature which is associated with imperialism and monopoly capitalism. They assert that authoritarian statism is unfolded with the growth of capitalism into distinct stages and phases.

4.8 KEY TERMS

- **Political economy:** A discipline of social science dealing with the interrelationship of political and economic processes
- **Marxism:** The political and economic theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, later developed by their followers to form the basis for the theory and practice of communism
- **Neo-Marxism:** Relating to forms of political philosophy which arise from the adaptation of Marxist thought to accommodate or confront modern issues such as the global economy, the capitalist welfare state, and the stability of liberal democracies

4.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The most notable books published by Karl Marx are: *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Capital* (1867–1894).
2. Marx sought a clear and direct view, a materialist view of the world and, in particular, its developmental process through historical process. His perspective of development was tried to his understanding of dialectical and historical materialism.
3. Webster's dictionary identifies political economy in the eighteenth century as a field of Government concerned with directing policies toward the enhancement of Government and community wealth.
4. Dialectics is an approach that focuses on relation and change, and tries to avoid seeing the universe as composed of separate objects, each with essentially stable unchanging characteristics.
5. The development of Neo-Marxism came forth through several political and social problems which traditional Marxist thought was unable to answer.
6. The principal tenet of the neo-Marxist theory of underdevelopment is that underdevelopment of third world countries is not a stage on the road to capitalism; it is a condition or symptom of their domination by the capitalist world.

7. The specificity about the 'capitalist mode of production' is that most of the inputs and outputs of production are supplied commercially through the market (i.e., they are commodities).
8. Marx condemns capitalism as an exploitative and alienating system, but also as an irrational one.
9. Structuralism has been criticized by writers like Paul Baran and Sweezy because it cannot explain class action arising from class consciousness. It is also criticized that the structural analysis tends to be static and tied to inputs and outputs rather than a dynamic expression of class struggle.
10. Relative autonomy simply means the degree of freedom which the state has in determining hub best to serve what those who hold power conceive to be 'national interest', in which in fact involves the service of the interest of the ruling class.

4.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What was Marx's materialistic view?
2. How did the definition of political economy change from the 18th to the 19th century?
3. What are the criticisms associated with the structuralist theory?
4. List a few points to summarize capitalism as an economic system and mode of production.
5. What is the overall aim of capitalist production?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Do you think Marx's method is scientific? Give argument for your answer.
2. Critically examine the political economy approach.
3. Explain the Neo-Marxists view of development.
4. Write a critical analysis on the concept of mode of production.
5. Write a note on the nature of the state.

4.11 FURTHER READING

Sharma, Urmila and S.K. Sharma. 2000. *Principles and Theory of Political Science*. Atlantic Publishers.

Leopold, David and Marc Stears. 2008. *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches.* Oxford University Press.

Elster, Jon. 1993. *Political Psychology*. Cambridge University Press.

Agarwal, R. C. 1991. *Political Theory: Principles of Political Science.* S. Chand Publishers.

Hoffman, John. 2007. *A Glossary of Political Theory*. Stanford University Press.

NOTES

NOTES