**E-Content**

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**WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

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**I. PERIODIZATION- WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

The two and a half thousand years span of European history is conventionally divided into a number of periods. These periods do not form absolutely discrete historical entities, but they are useful ways of capturing distinctive features of the political, economic and social structures of Western societies at different stages in their development, and the sets of intellectual, religious and political beliefs that correspond to them. The first thousand years, that is, from about 500 BC until 500 AD, is referred to as *the ‘ancient’ period*. During this period Western political thought focused on the city states of Greece, and on the Roman Republic and the Empire that succeeded it. There were some similarities between the governments of the Greek city states and that which emerged during the history of the Roman Republic, and thinkers who reflected on the experience of the latter were aware of the ideas of their Greek predecessors. For most of this period political thinking focused on pre-Christian societies, but in late antiquity it had to come to grips with the growing influence of Christian ideas in the Roman Empire. *The medieval period* extends from the *sixth century to the late fifteenth century*. Medieval political thought reflected the Christian basis of Western culture, the erosion of the authority of the Holy Roman Empire, the emergence of the complex system of economic, political and social organization known as ‘feudalism’, and the appearance towards the end of the period of increasingly unified ‘nation states’. These states dominated the political history of the *early modern period*, which extends from the *early sixteenth to the late eighteenth century*. During the first two centuries of the early modern period the religious and political ramifications of the division of Western Christendom into two camps as a result of the Protestant Reformation had a major impact on political thought. The Reformation, which began in 1517 in Germany and quickly spread throughout Europe, was met by a counterreformation conducted by rulers who remained attached to Roman Catholicism. These events stimulated an upsurge in speculation on political questions, and they overlapped with the reappearance, particularly in Italy, of forms of government that focused on city states and the recovery of philosophical works from the ancient world. These developments meant that late medieval and early modern political theory was set in a framework that capitalized to some degree on ideas derived from the Greek and Roman worlds. Sometimes the use of ancient works produced conceptions of politics that ran counter to lessons derived from the Christian tradition. The influence of the latter was also blunted to some degree in the seventeenth century by the burgeoning interest in scientific investigation, and in the eighteenth century by the stress placed on human reason by the ‘enlightenment’ movements in a number of European countries. Taken together, these developments prepared the ground for the more secular perspectives on politics advanced by a number of ‘*modern’ writers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries*. In the modern period political theory not only became increasingly, although not exclusively, secular in orientation, but it also focused on issues that were distinctive to the recent experience of Western societies and the other countries of the world that were influenced by them. Unprecedented developments in the economic life of these societies, conventionally categorized as the ‘industrial revolution’, and the democratization of social and political relationships, had a marked impact on the way that people thought about politics. The modern period witnessed the appearance of a wide range of complex political theories, elements of which were incorporated into the political ideologies that were attached to the perceived interests of distinct groups or classes within society. Thus while the political thinking of the modern world exhibited some continuity with that of earlier periods, it was also marked by the appearance of theories of mass politics, and those promoting deliberate, revolutionary change. Both of these developments involved a significant departure from the approaches to politics that had characterized earlier periods.

**II. Features of Western political Thought**

1. **A contribution of Greeks**:

According to Ernest Barker,” Political thought begins with the Greeks. Its origin is connected with the calm and clear rationalization of Greek mind.” Wayper has paid tribute to them by saying that,” whenever we use the word ‘political’, a derivation from the Polis, for whatever else of the polis have vanished from the memory of man, politics and political thinking remain as its undying legacy to all future ages.”(pg.9) Greeks have found all the main answers that have been given to the question why should men obey the state. e.g, Marx *analysis of the class* determining the form of the state and the class itself determined by the economic interests is found in Plato’s idea of the state as well as in Aristotle’s theory. *Contract view* of the state was propounded by Glaucon, which is mentioned in Plato’s Republic. *State as a force is* held by Thrasymachus. *State as will* can be found in the arguments of Thucydides. Aristotle laid the intrinsic strength of his *Politeia* in the disliking of its subjects for a change in the constitution. We can see a foreshadowing of the *Utilitarian State* in the belief of Epicureans that the state exists to secure the largest possible good(pleasure).The organic view of the state or the Rational-Natural view of the state , is the greatest and most typical Greek contribution to political thought.

2. **Contextual/Historical**:

Political thought is the description of the political ideas from beginning to the end. It is sum- total of the ideas and matters relating to politics, state and government as expressed by the thinkers (usually from ancient Greeks to the contemporary time). It is historical in nature because it is described as history. It analyses, examines and evaluates issues that have a universal concern and are of perennial interest (e.g., Justice, liberty, law, Equality etc.) even though each political theorist responds to a particular political reality. Political thought/speculations of the Plato and Aristotle were determined by the nature of the city-states, so is the thought of the other periods related to its time and space (i.e., context). We cannot understand a particular thinker without relating his thought to his times and the issues of his times. Machiavelli is better understood in the context of renaissance; Hobbes and Locke in the background of English Civil War. Marx can be understood in the light of the growing capitalism of the European/Western society.

3. **Men centric/ Humanistic thought:**

All the western political thought (baring the middle ages) ranging from Greeks, Modern period and down to the contemporary period has a central focus i.e. Man. It is truly humanistic in its nature. It had not the element of authoritarianism and it attempted to study the problems of men/human beings and his place in society and offered its solutions. Men centric thought begins with Greeks as they exalted men and reduced gods, they moved from investigating the cosmos to the problems of men. According to Sophocles,” A wondrous thing is man- none more wondrous.”Waper writes,” *Other nations made gods, kings, spirits; the Greeks alone made men*.” They had discovered individual and realized that a man’s chief contribution to national life is his personality developed to the highest degree, which is regarded as their supreme gift to the generations ahead. Socrates said, ‘*The noblest of all investigations is the study of what man should be and what he should pursue.”*The Greeks showed a keen regards for the individual as well as a deep concern for the State. Both Plato and Aristotle regard State important for the sake of good life of the individuals.

Man/ human being remained the focus of the thought of the modern period and continue in the contemporary period as well. Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Roseau, Bentham, Mill, Marx down to contemporary times etc, all with their ideas and philosophy tried to focus on the Problem of men rather than gods or supernatural beings.

4. **Rationalistic as well as empirical in nature**:

Rationalism is the viewpoint that knowledge mostly comes from intellectual reasoning (innate ideas, reason and deduction), and empiricism is the viewpoint that knowledge mostly comes from using your senses to observe the world. Rationalism was the important feature of the Greek political philosophy (or thought). Socrates and Plato are the earliest pioneers of this school of thought (Aristotle’s contribution in form of *syllogistic logic* is considered as an instrument of rational explanation). Plato is regarded as the godfather of the early modern rationalism as his commitment to the existence of unchanging truths sharply contrasts with the variable images of the senses- which is closer to Aristotle. While Plato points up, to the realm of Forms, the unchanging objects of the pure intellect; Aristotle points to the earth, thereby indicating the experiential origin of knowledge. The modern political theorists (Francis Bacon, David Hume, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and George Berkeley) are chiefly empiricists but Descartes (father of rationalism), Spinoza and Leibniz are the advocates of the fundamental approach of rationalism.

***Both Normative as well as Empirical in its nature*;** Political thought is not primarily concerned with the facts of political life. It is normative in that it is concerned with the values, moral codes, social standards and ideals. Normativism has been a dominant characteristic of Political thought right from the Greeks but the impact of science has changed the trend of political thought towards scientism/empiricism.

**5. Variety:**

Western Political thought is rich in contents. Western Political thought has helped in stating the utility of political institutions, and political procedures to be followed. It has given the western tradition values such as democracy, nationalism, liberty, justice and above all the two parallel pillars- Idealism and Realism, on which rests the major frameworks of political theory.

Variety is an important feature of the western political thought- both of its classical period (ancient Greek period) and of its modern period. Greeks talked about the diverse issues/problems related to men and his society and their thought covered extensive topics and subjects.Greek thinkers laid their main attention towards the nature of the State and to man as a political animal; man could realize himself only through membership of the state. Greek thinkers discussed justice, Good, liberty, education, citizenship, slavery and fundamental questions of political obligations and revolution etc. They examine carefully the various grounds on which different social classes based their claims to political authority. They also tried out to find the ways by which government can be stable.

***Diversity and complexity- a vital feature of the thought of the nineteenth and twentieth century’s*;** we find a great and almost perplexing variety in the political thought of the 19th century. The profound and revolutionary changes produced by the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the technological advancement, and the newer theories of science and educational development were faithfully reflected in the political thought of the nineteenth century. It was impossible for any single idea to dominate it as the *contract idea* and the *divine origin theory* dominated the thinking of men from 16th to 18th century, or the idea of a *universal society* dominated in the middle ages. Pol. Thought in the 19th century became, one might say, a jumble of largely unrelated ideas and doctrines. One the one hand there was a group of thinkers propounding the *utilitarian theory( Bentham, Mill)*  which regards society as a means to the end of the individual happiness and on the other side there are the idealists whom start with the *social whole (Kant, Hegel)* and seek to adjust the individual to it. Some thinkers approach the study of the state and its problems from the point of view of biology and other through psychological approach. The theories of Marx and Engels also exerted a great influence on political speculation in the latter half of the 19th century which continues till the present day. Capitalism, the principle of free enterprise and competition, and the doctrine of *Laissez faire* on which social structure was based in the preceding era came in for sharp criticism at the hands of Marx and Engels; various *socialistic* and *communistic* theories of social reconstruction were propounded by those who were inspired from them. *Marxian Socialism*-a direct outcome of the industrial revolution, is thus the most profound (also disturbing) of all 19th century political ideas. The rival doctrines of *democracy and absolutism* are passionately debated, and the trend of thought is more in favor of democracy. In the 20th century democracy is menaced by communism and fascism. There are rivals theories to democracy as well as the *theories of pluralism*. The pluralistic attack on the traditional theory of state sovereignty was responsible for the emergence of newer theories of the nature of law and its relation to the state. Such great diversity did not characterize the political thought of any century before.

6. **Organic as well as mechanistic view of the state**:

The Greeks propounded the organic view of the state which continued in the middle ages as well. Modern political thought held mechanistic view of the state. Rousseau and Hegel, however, are the modern political thinkers who held the state as an organic entity.

**7. Academic in spirit/intellectual activity**

Political thoughtrepresents a high type of intellectual achievement, and like other forms of philosophical thought, has an interest and a value entirely apart from any practical application of its principles. Intelligent men naturally wish to understand the authority under which they live, to analyze its organization and its activities, and to speculate concerning the best form of political existence. The fact that many of the greatest thinkers of all time Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Mill, and many others-were concerned with the political aspects of philosophy is an indication of its importance as a form of intellectual effort.

19th century thought is the product of an academic activity. It developed in the hands of persons/thinkers most of who confined themselves to their libraries and seminars and had little contact with the affairs of the state (e.g., Marx). Their thought is thus academic in spirit; it is not influenced by the practical considerations to any appreciable extent. It had little effect on statesmen and politicians.

**8. Conservative as well as Critical in nature:**

Ancient (also medieval) thought is having the feature of conservatism as it was averse to changes and revolutions (Plato and Aristotle) but the modern thought is overwhelmed by the critical thought. It supports and favors changes and revolutions.

9. **Women and Western political thought**:

Most of the western political thought has been given by male philosophers with almost no female political theorist. We can say that western political thought is *gender-blind*. Most of the western political thinkers have reduced the status and lives of women by their theories of limiting their role in public sphere and of limiting their rights. Aristotle denied her citizenship, and Plato’ made her subject of Communism (snatches her of her very basic human/natural rights, e.g., of motherhood etc). A change in this trend can be seen in the late- modern thought in which theorist tried to present cases of women as equal being like that of man. Mill has argued for the equal rights of women. Female political theorists also came forward in the subsequent periods.

**III. Major Themes in Ancient Political Thought**:

Ancient Western Political thought is the thought laid down by the Greeks and to some extent by the Romans between 5th and 1st century B.C. The bulk of this thought is, however, given by Plato and Aristotle. Cicero (106-43 B.C) provides the Roman part of this classical thought. These thinkers reflected on a wide range of themes (topics that were largely discussed that time) that continued to be debated and discussed even today. Some of the major themes being discussed by the ancient political thought are as:

1. **Good Life- inseparable from a good state**:

Ancient political thinkers/philosophers pondered over the question of life and found that the purpose of life is to lead a good life (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle). They discussed the ‘idea of good’ and ‘good life’ which they believed was possible only in a good state. Hence they accorded a great importance to the institution of the state. According to Aristotle,’ State comes into existence for the sake of life and it continues to its existence for the sake of good life.’ Both Plato and Aristotle believed that State is both a moral as well as a political institution .i.e., Ethics and politics together exists in the state.

**2**. **Best form of State/good state: -**

In both the ancient Greek and the Roman thought, we come across complementary notions of a ‘good state’. Plato claimed that the best state is the just state, and this will be organized therefore as to match human nature and so be appropriate to the sort of creatures we are. A good state according to Plato is well governed, well defended or protected and well fed. He divides his ideal or good state in his ‘republic’ into three separate classes for undertaking these three functions. There were the Philosophers to rule, the soldiers to defend, and the workers to produce. Justice is attained in both the city and the soul when each of their respective constituent parts ‘mind its own business’. This provides city the unity and happiness to its people. Aristotle believed in best practicable state i.e., Polity, where there would be rule of law, was less prone to revolutions and where the rulers ruled in the interest of the whole state. He also believed that a state should be neither too large nor too small because too large a state was difficult to be governed efficiently and too small incapable of sufficiently fulfilling the needs of its survival.

**3. Justice:**

One of the most important themes discussed by the Greeks was the idea of the Justice. The Greeks looked upon justice as the virtue in action and therefore a virtue. The Greek conception of justice was virtue of soul and injustice its vice. To both Plato and Aristotle Justice meant goodness as well as willingness to obey laws. It connotes correspondence of rights and duties. Justice according to Greeks is the supreme virtue or characteristic of a good state. For Greeks a good state was necessarily a just state. The title of Plato’s great work ‘*Republic*’ means ‘justice’ or ‘*concerning justice’*. Infact, Plato sketched his ideal state in Republic to show the true nature and habitation of justice. According to Plato, true justice could be established in the state only when the philosophers ruled, and the other two classes i.e., soldiers and workers (economy class) performed their respective duties to the best of their capabilities without mendling in each other’s spheres of activities. For Aristotle also, justice was the supreme virtue of a good state and the injustice or the feeling of injustice was responsible for creating revolutionary conditions in the state. However, unlike Plato, Aristotle viewed justice more as an enjoyment of rights than as performance of duties. For Aristotle, justice implies, ‘*treating equals equally and unequals unequally’*.

4**. State as a natural institution/ Organic concept of the state:**

Both Plato and Aristotle subscribed to the view of the state as a natural institution in the sense that human beings are born in it/or with it. According to Aristotle, Man is a social and a political being means that the state is a natural institution not a man-made institution. This gave rise to the organic concept of the state which was held by both Plato and Aristotle. According to this Organic view, the state is like an organism (or as a whole) whose parts could find their fullest development only within the organism. According to Plato,” State is individual writ large”, i.e., it is individual magnified. As long as the state remained healthy and good, its parts (or individuals) were automatically good and healthy. The same view is expressed by Aristotle in a different manner i.e.,’ State is prior to individual’. Romans also held an organic view of the state. We came across the notion of a strong, unified and centralized state in Roman thought.

5**. Rulers in a good state**:

Greek philosophers have also addressed the question -who should be the ruler of the state or who should hold supreme power in a good state?

For Plato, power must be given to the philosophers-to those who have true knowledge. Such philosopher according to him will be selfless and have the knowledge of common good. According to Plato, ‘unless political power and philosophy meet together…there can be no rest from troubles…. for states……nor for all mankind.’ The Philosopher according to Plato must have absolute and unlimited powers. Aristotle did not agree with Plato on giving absolute and unlimited powers to the rulers. His good state/best practical state was always constitutional and not the enlightened despotism of Plato. (Plato had accepted in his later work *‘Laws’* the importance of rule of law).

**6. Revolution and its causes:**

Greek theorists also discussed the revolutions and their causes in their political theories. Although Plato and Aristotle discussed revolutions, they had no intention of promoting them. Plato treated revolutions as a consequence of the moral corruption of the population, a process that inaugurated lawless mob rule and ended in tyranny. Aristotle attributed them to the desire of certain sections of the population – especially the rich few and the numerous poor – to press their unjust claims for exclusive power in the state. He also related revolutions to changes in the socioeconomic structure of the *polis*. Aristotle’s political instincts were conservative so he generally viewed the disruption caused by revolutions with a jaundiced eye. His perspective is reflected in the observation that while only the virtuous few really have a claim to seize power, their sense of virtue, and presumably their awareness of the destabilizing effects of revolutionary activity, means that they will not press their claims. Plato’s and Aristotle’s focus is very much on keeping the threat of revolutionary action at bay. For these writers, revolution was part of a process of political change that they associated with the corruption of the state and its degeneration to a less acceptable form.

**7. Democracy**:

Both Plato and Aristotle had lived in the democratic Greek city-state of Athens but both viewed democracy as the worst (or poor) form of rule/government because of the obvious reasons (defects). Plato’s negative view for democracy was largely developed because it was the democracy of Athens which led to the execution of his great master and friend, Socrates. When Socrates died, Plato concluded that democracy was a corrupt and unjust form of government. Key argument of Plato against democracy has been his contention that there is a skill to ruling that is dependent upon knowledge of the Forms of Justice and that this knowledge is available only to a few (philosophers).Without the guidance provided by the ‘pattern’ of the forms of justice the political decisions of the masses will be fickle and arbitrary. The People lack objective reasons and their decisions will change according to their mood and appetites. Plato’s guardians clearly exemplify rule by the few. The advantages of rule by the few are highlighted by Plato’s frequent pejorative references to popular rule. Democracies are dominated by the least rational members of the population, and they are disfigured by their tendency to produce a narrowly selfish form of class rule that ends up in chaos or tyranny. Aristotle’s views about democracy hold that democratic office will cause corruption in the people, if the people choose to redistribute the wealth of the country.

**8. Educatio**n:

Greek Philosophers have also focused on education. Plato and Aristotle saw education as the prime source of the individual and the chief function of the state. It was a necessity to mankind and a remedy to all problems. Plato has given much attention to develop a comprehensive theory of education in his Republic. Plato regards education as a social process by which the units of a society become instinct with social consciousness and learn to fulfill all social demands. Plato’s scheme of education is a life –long process and for Plato, it hardly matters what else state does, if it fails to manage education. According to Aristotle, education can develop certain virtues and it is in ethics that state has to come forward to excel the individuals in their virtues. Like Plato, Aristotle asserted that education was an effective way to produce political unity.

**9. Property:**

Property and its ownership and utility also form an important theme in the ancient political thought. Plato’s conviction that what brings about corruption and dissolution in a State is the pursuit of private economic interests by those who exercise political power shows deep political insight, so he suggested remedy to it by his idea of communism. In his book, ‘Republic’, Plato fetches out a scheme of communism of property under which the guardians (ruling class and warriors or auxiliary class) are denied ownership of property. Only the workers are allowed to own property but mainly for common use. Its main objective was to prevent corruption. Since property was responsible for arousing greed in its owners and thereby making them selfish, so he abolishes private property for the guardians. On the other hand, Aristotle did not agree with the Plato’s communism of property. He regards it radical and unnatural as it went against the natural instinct of possession. According to Aristotle, there may be some evils associated with property but it has more good than evil associated with it. According to Aristotle, those who have private property are good for the state because they will prefer stability, they will have time (or leisure) to participate in the affairs of the city-state and they will acquire good traits like that of charity, generosity etc. For him, it was not good thing to deprive ruling class of the ownership of the property. It goes against human psychology, against the instinct of possession. It is the source of motivation and self work. Ruling class will develop ill feeling towards those who possess it. Aristotle suggested that the evil consequences of property could be eliminated even without abolishing it.

**10. Family:**

Along with property, the love of the family is in Plato’s view a source of corruption and nepotism. It is for the family that man accumulates wealth. Plato’s suggested the communism of private family (women) for the guardians to make it easier to them to devote themselves whole heartedly to the concern of the state. Under this scheme, the guardian classes will have no private families as they would live in barracks where they would have common wives amongst the genetically ablest women. And once a child is born, State will take away the child to be reared in a sort of State managed nursery. Plato believed that communism of private property and family would create unity in the state apart from preventing the rulers from becoming selfish and corrupt. However, Aristotle disagreed with Plato on what he regards as Plato’s “radical departure from experience”. According to Aristotle, family is a time tested institution and a source of happiness. Aristotle also questioned the belief of Plato that communism (of property and family) would produce the unity in the polis or the state. On the contrary, it was bound to create confusion and lead to common neglect.

Other subsidiary themes discussed by the Ancient political thinkers are concepts like Slavery, Citizenship, law etc.

**IV. Major questions of modern political thought**:

Waper writes in his book,” Political thought is thought about the State, its structures, its nature, and its purpose. Its concern is with nothing less than “the moral phenomena of human behavior in society.”It seeks not so much an explanation of the existence of the State as a justification of its continuance. What is the State and why should I obey it? What are the proper limits of its authority and when may I refuse to obey it? How is the authority of the State with which I cannot dispense to be made compatible with the liberty without which I am less than a man? These are the questions which political thought is forever striving to answer.” (Wayper, pg.1)

If an analysis be made of the questions with which political thought has been concerned, it is found that emphasis was placed at various periods upon widely different types of problems. In the medieval period political controversy centered in the contest for supremacy between spiritual and temporal authorities; in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (modern period) the dominant interest was in the contest between monarchic and democratic theories of political organization; at present, the extent of the extent of state activities has come into prominence, and the connection between political and economic interests is especially close. Besides, political conditions have changed so greatly from age to age that the same problems had quite different meanings at different periods.

**MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

The rise of the new nation-states in the countries of the Western Europe towards the end of the medieval period and most importantly the revival of learning (rebirth of the antiquity reason) in the sixteenth century, known as the Renaissance and the Reformation transformed medieval into modern Europe, and laid the foundations of what is known as modern political thought. It centers round the nation-state which claim to be secular and sovereign.

Following were the major questions which political thought tried to answer:

1. **The problem of Political authority and obligation** :( what is the authority of the state and rights of the individual?)

Various approaches have been taken by political theorists from time to time in order to answer the questions related to the problem of political authority and obligation. And the problem was also confronted by the thinkers of the modern period. The perennial problem of ‘political authority and obligation’ has a widely discussed justification in what is often called as *consent theory or contract theory*. Consent theory is often associated with the seventeenth century English philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, and with the eighteenth century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Consent theorists make two claims. First, they claim that, by consenting to obey the law, each of us can impose on ourselves an obligation to obey the law. Second, they claim that we have, in fact, consented to obey the law. The second claim, however, is controversial and has provoked many active and enduring debates in the history of political thought. Another group of theorists starting with Jeremy Bentham tried to ground a case for political authority and obligation in *Utilitarianism*, appealing to the benefits to society of obedience to the state. Some thinkers have even argued for anarchy (e.g., Godwin). Marx regards State as the instrument of exploitation in the hands of the capitalists and proposed for a stateless and classless system.

2. **ABSOLUTISM VS INDIVIDUALISM (or DEMOCRACY)**

Although absolutism was a feature of the medieval political order and its defense is put forward by the divine theory. The earliest modern political theorist who came in defense of the Absolutism is Thomas Hobbes who wrote Leviathan in 1651. He justified the complete obedience to a single will as a necessity to maintain order and security. In the eighteenth century, liberal thinkers (Locke, Roseau, and later on Mill etc.) favoured individualism because they wished to limit the activities of the governments controlled by irresponsible monarchs. With the transfer of the political power from the king to the people and government came to be looked upon as a servant for public welfare. Thus the trend of the modern political thought has been towards democracy and we have a variety of accounts of the justification of democracy, from instrumental to intrinsic.

**3. Question of Sovereignty?**

Since the middle ages, political theory has been dominated by the idea of sovereignty. Sovereignty became prominent in political thought through the writings of Machiavelli, Luther, Bodin and Hobbes. However, the classical form of the doctrine of sovereignty emerged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially in the writings of English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes argued that sovereign authority must be neither divided nor limited and that it commands and can never be commanded. The earliest political philosophers found the source of authority in law; but the rise of national monarchies personified the state in the ruler and conceived its essential relationship to be between sovereign and subjects. Attacks on royal power led to the theory of popular sovereignty, attributing ultimate political power to the entire body of citizens, and associating the concept of sovereignty with the state as a legal person, rather than with the ruler as an individual. The doctrine of Popular Sovereignty is the view that sovereignty belongs to the people and that authority is legitimate when it rests (directly or indirectly) on consent of those subject to it. The vague and non-legal nature of popular sovereignty led, during the nineteenth century, to elaborate attempts to locate sovereignty in various organs of government, on the basis of the separation of powers established by written constitutions. Endless difficulties, especially in federal states, were encountered in this attempt. Besides, the concept of the absolute, supreme, and indivisible sovereignty of the state met difficulties, both in the existence of organizations within the state, which seemed to have a juristic life and authority of their own, and in the relations among states, where the theory of the equality and independence of sovereign states conflicted with actual inequalities and with various degrees of dependence. Contemporary political thought is making a considerable effort to recast the theory of sovereignty to correspond with present conditions.

**4. Theory of the state/ Origin?**

Some thinkers have attempted to build up a consistent and comprehensive theory of the state. Origin of the state theories (like divine theory, the force theory) was given a new explanation in terms of The Social contract theory, which viewed the state as the deliberate creation of individuals by means of voluntary agreement or consent.

**5. Nation-State? What constitute a nation state**?

Ideas concerning the proper size of the state have undergone marked changes. The Greeks considered the city to be the desirable type. During the middle ages (Roman Empire), the ideal of a world state dominated men’s mind for centuries. In modern times, the *nation state*, based on geographical and ethnic unity, has been considered natural. There are others who believe that they are uniquely modern creations and are having objective criteria. By the beginning of the 17th century, the concept of the State- its nature, its powers, its rights to command obedience-had come to be recognized as the most important object of analysis in European political thought. (Imperialistic conception of colonial empire and idea of world federation has also appealed to many in subsequent periods).

**5. Concept of law**

The conception of law has undergone various transformations. Originating as custom, supported by immemorial tradition and the prevailing belief in divine sanction, in the modern period it was considered as existing in nature, to be discovered and applied by human reason. When national monarchies were established, the will of the sovereign became a source of law. Finally, modern democracies have attained to the idea that law, as the will of the state, should be formulated and administered by popular governmental organs, and should be modified as occasion demands new rules to meet new social needs.

**6. Basis of Political Authority**

At first the ruler was lord of his people. The state was a collection of individuals, sometimes without permanent abode; and obedience was a more or less personal matter, rendered to the chief or king because of his position in the kinship group, or his supposed relation to the gods, or his power as leader in war. As life became more stable, and agriculture and trade necessitated permanent homes, especially after feudalism associated the ideas of governing power and landholding, the concept of territorial sovereignty arose. Kings became lords of the land rather than of the people, and questions of citizenship and domicile became more important than those of religion and birth. The form of government and the location of sovereign authority within the state have been constant sources of controversy in political theory. Whether political power should be centered in a single head, or limited to an aristocratic few, or widely distributed among the democratic masses, furnished much ground for discussion. Many thinkers also tried to establish the normal cycle in which the different forms appeared and succeeded one another. The method of selecting the monarch, the basis of aristocratic class distinctions, and the devices of popular government, with their complex checks and balances, offered further complications.

**7. Problem of Liberty and Rights**

Theories of the process by which change in governmental organization might be accomplished, and of the rights of the people to assume a share in governing authority, have also been important. The rise of the masses from slavery to freedom was a slow and difficult process. The Greeks justified slavery by the dogma that nature made men unequal; the Romans, by the authority of the victor over the vanquished; the medieval church, by the doctrine of God's punishment for sin, and the right of Christians to rule over heathen peoples. Later theory added to these the principles of racial inequality and social expediency. Against slavery was urged the theory that men are brothers, by nature free and equal, and that no man has the right to hold his fellowman in subjection. Modern political thought addressed the issue of rights and liberties in different ways. Hobbes and Locke have been great advocates of natural rights theory which is hallmark of modern legal and political thought. Hobbes puts in chapter 21 of *Leviathan*: ‘A *free man ,is he, that in those things, which by his strength and wit he is able to do, is not hindered to do what he has a will to do*.’ According to Locke, any magistrate that systematically denies to his subjects the exercise of their natural rights to their life, liberty, and estate is tyrannical and unworthy of obedience. The notion of Natural rights gave rise to civil rights theories. Various alternative theories also were presented- like Mill’s Utilitarianism -who advocates that civil rights ought to be grounded on the general welfare. The gradual adoption by all civilized states of written constitutions, representative assemblies, local self-government, and popularly chosen officials is the result of world-wide discussion concerning the rights of man and the best form of political organization. The nature of a federal state, and the relation of its component members to the union, also gave rise to serious controversy, especially in the United States. More recently, the question of direct versus representative democracy has been reopened. The basis of representation has also undergone changes. At first the social classes, nobility, clergy, and commoners in city and shire, sent their delegates. The idea of human equality and popular sovereignty led to the representation of territorial population groups, approximately equal in the numbers of their inhabitants. The present importance of economic organizations within the state has given rise to the theory of guild socialism, which would allow some representation at least to occupational groups within the state. Wide differences of opinion have arisen over the proper scope of state activities. At one extreme is found an individualism that would limit the state to the narrowest exercise of authority and leave to its individual citizens the widest possible sphere of free action. At the other extreme is a paternalistic socialism that would extend state action to the widest limits and submerge the individual in the political mass. Between these extremes all shades of opinion may be found. Certain activities are recognized by all as essential to state existence, but over a wide range of optional functions a great controversy is waged. The theory that views the state as divine in origin or as an organic personality naturally emphasizes the importance of the state; the theory that bases the state upon unjust aggression or upon voluntary agreement manifested by a social contract emphasizes the importance of individual liberty.

**7. The question of Change and status-quoists:**

The status-quoists are quite satisfied with the way political and social institutions have been functioning and the way state-society and state-individual relationships have been ordered. They do not approve any change, particularly sudden change, in the existing political arrangements. They are known as conservatives. The opposite group is favoring gradual and peace-meal change and is called as liberals. There are still others who are very much critical of the state and its institutions and structures. They side with change (sweeping change or radical one)

***Modern thought was more overwhelmed by the critical thought;*** An important example of critical political thought was the doctrine of social contract and natural rights, as set forth by Locke and Rousseau. This theory served as the basis for the English revolution of the seventeenth century and the French and American revolutions of the eighteenth century. It attacked the divine right of kings and justified revolution and popular sovereignty. Modern socialistic doctrines furnish other examples of critical theory. Thus the theory of natural rights, with its emphasis on individualism and on the safeguarding of personal and property rights, was a critical theory in the eighteenth century, attacking the autocratic and paternalistic governments of that day. Marxism is highly radical and revolutionary in character. Milder forms of conservative theory were represented in the laudation of the British constitution during the eighteenth century, in the writings of Montesquieu, Blackstone, and De Lolme, and in the general praise accorded to the American constitution by almost all American writers during the nineteenth century.

V. **Suggested Readings**

*1. Catriona Mckinnon: Issues in Political Theory, Oxford Publication, 2nd edition*

*2. John Morrow: A History of Western Political Thought: A Thematic Introduction*

*3. C.L. Wayper: Political Thought, Surjeet Publications*

*4. J.P Suda, History of Political Thought ,Volume I,II,III*

*5. Peri Roberts and Peter Sutch: An Introduction to Political Thought-A conceptual*

*Toolkit, Atlantic Publishers*

*6. Sabine, A History of Political Theory, 4th Edition*

*7. Sir Ernest Barker, Greek Political Theory*