

## E-Content: Western Political Thought

**Prepared by:**

**Dr. Shahzada Ashraf**

**Sr. Assistant Professor**

**Political Science Department**

**GDC, Kulgam.**

### **Major themes in ancient political thought**

**Ancient Western political thought refers to the thought given by the Greeks and to some extent by the Romans from the 5th to 1st century BC. The bulk of this thought is, however, given by Plato and Aristotle. These thinkers reflected on a wide range of themes that continue to be debated and discussed even today. Some of the major themes discussed in Ancient thought are;**

#### **1. Good Life- Inseparable from a good state;**

**The ancient thinkers believed that the purpose of the Life was to lead a good life. And for the Greeks Good Life was Inseparable from a good state. For them, state was the most important institution without which no man could live a good life. According to Aristotle, "State comes into existence for the sake of life and it continues its existence for the sake of good life."**

#### **2. State as a natural institution/ Organic concept of the State;**

**Both Plato and Aristotle regarded the state as a natural Institution. Infact, both of them equated the state with an organism. Just as it is impossible for the parts of an organism to survive and develop outside the organism, so also it is impossible for the parts of the state that is-the individuals to survive and find the fullest development of**

their personalities outside the state. According to Plato, state is an individual writ-large, that is, it is an individual magnified. As long as the state remained healthy and good, its parts, that is, individuals were automatically healthy and good. Similarly according to Aristotle, "state is prior to the individual". This means we cannot think of the parts without having an idea about the whole.

### **3. What is a good State?**

For both Plato and Aristotle, a good state is the one which is well governed, well defended or protected and well-fed (Economically sound). In his Republic, Plato divides his good state or ideal State into three separate classes for undertaking these three functions. There are the Philosophers to rule, the soldiers to defend the state and the Peasants or producers to produce. For Aristotle a good state is the one which is less prone to Revolutions. And when a state is well governed, well defended and well fed, its chances of witnessing any revolution are minimum. Because of this reason he, argued that a State should neither be too big nor too small. That is a state should be big enough as to be self-sufficient (full of resources) and it should be small enough as to be well governed.

### **5. Rulers in a good State and their limits of power;**

Both Plato and Aristotle showed a deep concern over the misuse of power. To prevent the misuse of power, Plato suggested that power should be given to the philosophers. The Philosophers according to him will have two qualities 1. They have knowledge (of common good) and 2. They would be selfless. Thus, according to Plato, "until philosophers are Kings or Kings and princes have the spirit and power of philosophy, cities will never have rest from their evils or troubles". The philosophers were to be given absolute or unlimited powers. Aristotle did not agree with Plato on this count. He feared that Plato's scheme would necessarily result in the misuse of power. He therefore, opined that supreme power should be vested in the Constitution. That is he believed in rule of law rather than rule of philosophers or rule of enlightenment despots.

### **6. Justice- the supreme virtue of a State;**

One of the most important themes discussed by the Greeks was the idea of Justice. The Greeks regarded justice as the Supreme virtue of a good state. For them, a good state was necessarily a Just state. So much importance did the Greeks attach to the idea

of Justice that Plato subtitled his "Republic" as 'Concerning Justice'. In fact he sketched his ideal or good state in his Republic to show the true nature and habitation of Justice. According to Plato, true Justice could be established in the state when all the three classes in the State-- the philosophers, the soldiers and the Peasants performed their duties to the best of their capabilities without interfering in each other's spheres of activities. For Aristotle also, Justice was the Supreme virtue of a good State and that 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 him, Justice involved "treating equals equally and unequals unequally".

## **7. Property and its utility;**

Property and its ownership and utility also form an important theme in the ancient political thought. In his Republic Plato fetches out a scheme of "Communism of property" under which the ruling class and the soldiers are denied ownership of property. Only the workers are allowed to own property but mainly for Common use. Its main objective according to Plato was to prevent the rulers (and soldiers) from becoming corrupt. Since property was responsible for making its owners greedy and selfish, so Plato abolishes private property all together for the ruling class and the soldier class. Aristotle, however, did not agree with Plato on communism of property. He regarded it radical and unnatural as it undermined man's Natural Instincts of acquisition. According to Aristotle, those who have private property are good for the state because they will prefer stability and they will have time (or leisure) to participate in the affairs of the State. Ownership of property will also allow them to acquire some other good traits like that of Charity, generosity etc. For him, it was not a good thing to deprive ruling class of the ownership of the property. It goes against human psychology and man's Instincts 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.

## **Major questions in modern political thought;**

**Modern political thought refers to the thought that began to flourish in Europe towards the end of the medieval period. It emerged as a reaction against the collective tyranny of the church (distorted Christianity) and the absolute monarchies. The major impetus to this thought was provided by the Renaissance (14th---16th century CE). The first glimpses of modern political thought are seen in the thoughts of Niccolo Machiavelli.**

**The major questions that have been raised and debated in modern political thought are as under;**

- 1. Is religion and ethics inseparable from politics?**
- 2. What is the origin of State? Is it man made or divine?**
- 3. Is it obligatory for the people to obey the State....question of political obligation? Or  
Why should we obey the State?**
- 4. What should be the extent of authority of the State?**
- 5. Can liberty be reconciled with authority?**
- 6. What is the best form of government....democracy or monarchy?**
- 7. Who should be the Sovereign in a State people or laws or rulers? And should  
Sovereignty be limited or absolute?**
- 8. What is the proper scope of State activities?**

- 1. is Religion and Ethics Inseparable from politics;**

During the medieval period, politics was seen as an inseparable part of Religion and Ethics. And since religion (Christianity) was distorted, the fusion of religion, ethics and politics had allowed the ruling class and the clergy to exploit the common masses. Modern political thinkers questioned this tendency of looking at politics as an inseparable part of politics. Secularism was glorified by almost all the modern thinkers with Marx viewing religion as opium of masses. On the other hand thinkers like N. Machiavelli not only separated religion and ethics from politics but also subordinated them to politics.

## **2. What is the origin of State?**

The medieval political thought had established the principle or assumption that State was created by God and that God chose a representative from amongst the people to rule this State. This assumption was rejected by modern Political thinkers. Modern thinkers like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau put forward the Social contract theory to show that State was a man made institution created by people through a social contract. According to these thinkers prior to the creation of State, men lived in the pre-political "State of Nature". The problems and inconveniences faced by them in the State of Nature forced them to enter into a mutual contract to create the State. Thus, the State is mostly viewed as a man made institution in the modern political thought.

## **3. Is it obligatory for the people to obey the State? Why do people need to Obey the State?**

During the Medieval times obedience to the state was regarded as a religious duty. One who disobeyed the State was thought to have committed a sin. The modern political thinkers in general justified obedience to the State on the grounds of prudence, morality and utility, even though Marx and a group of anarchists were of different opinion. For thinkers like Hobbes and Locke, it was prudent on the part of the people to obey the State because otherwise the State would become as lawless as the pre-political "State of Nature". Locke also basis obedience to the State on the 'consent' of the people. For

Bentham and Mill, obedience to the State had utility ( as it promoted the greatest happiness of the greatest number).For thinkers like Rousseau and Hegel obeying the State was in the larger interests of the people as they could find their fullest development only by obeying the State. Others like TH Green justified obedience to the State on moral grounds as the State provided numerous services to the people.

#### **4. What should be the extent of authority of the State?**

This has perhaps remained the most debatable question in modern political thought. On the one hand we have thinkers like Locke, Adam Smith, Bentham and others who have defended a State with minimum authority. Locke for instance defended a night watchman State or a minimal State whose services were required only when the life, liberty and property of an individual was threatened. These thinkers justified limited authority of the State on the ground that an increase in authority of the State was harmful to individual liberty. For them State was a necessary evil. On the other hand thinkers like Hobbes, Rousseau and Hegel argued in favour of a State with more or absolute authority. For Hobbes a State with absolute authority was necessary to prevent the selfish and egoistic individuals from disturbing peace and development. For Hegel, State was March of God on earth and the individuals could realize their greater self only in an absolute State.

#### **5. Can liberty be reconciled with authority?**

This has also been a debatable question in the modern political thought. Usually a State with more authority is thought to limit the liberty of the individuals and vice versa. Rousseau tried to reconcile authority with liberty through his notion of General Will and popular Sovereignty. But it became controversial in actual practice as many absolutist rulers and dictators tried to justify their absolute rule in the name of common good (or general will).

## **6. What is the best form of government?**

**While thinkers like Hobbes and Hegel supported monarchy, most of the modern thinkers viewed democracy as better form of government. Hobbes preferred monarchy over democracy because for him selfishness of one person was better than selfishness of many and that monarchy was more likely to maintain peace and order in a society of selfish individuals. Thinkers like Rousseau, Bentham, Mill and others supported democracy mostly on the ground that it didn't threaten the liberty of individuals. Marx viewed democracy as a false government.**

## **7. Question of Sovereignty;**

**The question of sovereignty created many difficulties for modern political thinkers, especially with regard to its location and limits. While thinkers like Hobbes, Austin etc justified absolute sovereignty of human individuals; Locke defended limited political sovereignty and Rousseau absolute popular sovereignty.**

### **Aristotle on Citizenship:**

**Aristotle had a conservative standpoint for the concept of citizenship. Aristotle explained a state as a collective body of citizens. Citizenship was not to be determined by residence since the resident aliens and slaves also shared a common residence with citizens but were not citizens. He describes citizen as a person who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state. Aristotle specified that the young and the old could not be citizens, for one was immature and the other infirm. He did not regard women as citizens, for they lacked the deliberative faculty and the leisure to understand the working of politics. A good citizen would have the intelligence and the ability to rule and be ruled. Aristotle suggested a good citizen as someone who**

could live in harmony with the constitution and had sufficient leisure time to devote himself to the tasks and responsibilities of citizenship. A good citizen would possess virtue or moral goodness that would help in realising a selfless and cooperative civic life. According to William Ebenstein, "Aristotle's idea of citizenship is that of the economically independent gentleman who has enough experience, education and leisure to devote him to active citizenship, for citizen must not lead the life of mechanics or tradesmen, for such life is hostile to virtue. Thus, he regarded citizenship as a bond forged by the intimacy of participation in public matters. Citizenship is nothing less than the fullest fulfilment of human potential in terms of the 'good life'. In this respect, as throughout Aristotle's Politics, the essence of citizenship lies in active participation. The citizen is not merely an inhabitant of the state, nor simply a member of a politically privileged class.

Aristotle makes significant difference between the 'parts' of the state and its "necessary conditions". Only those who actively share or have the means and leisure to share in the government of the state are its components or integral part. All the others are just the necessary conditions who provide the material environment within which the active citizens freed from menial tasks, can function.

It is demonstrated in theoretical studies that "Aristotle's idea of a citizen is broadly different from the modern conception because it is not representative but primary government that he has in view. His citizen is not content to have a say in the choosing of his rulers; every citizen is actually to rule in turn, and not merely in the sense of being a member of the executive, but in the sense, a more important one for Aristotle, of helping to make the laws of his state, for the executive is assigned the comparatively small function supplementing the laws when they are inadequate owing to their generality. It is owing to this lofty conception of a citizen's duties that he so closely narrows the citizen body." This is the reason that Aristotle excludes the mechanic class from citizenship.

Aristotle's conception of the citizen would not be effective today. He was unsuccessful to see the prospects of representative government.



## **John Locke's views on rights;**

**John Locke is regarded as one of the most ardent champions of natural rights. He mainly defends the right to life liberty and property and regards them as inalienable rights.**

**According to Locke, these three rights were enjoyed by an individual even in the pre-political "state of nature", (A condition before the emergence of the actual State). According to him, the state of nature had a law of nature which taught every person ' that being equal and free, no one ought to harm another in his life liberty and property. However, since there was no common authority in the state of nature to enforce (and interpret) the law of nature, these three rights remained insecure in the state of nature. The inconveniences that were caused by the lack of common authority in the state of nature made every person the judge and enforcer of the law of nature. Because of this, every person regarded it as his right to punish the violators of the law of nature. In order to do away with the inconveniences of the state of nature, people enter into a contract to create the state. While they surrendered their right to be their own judges to the State, they retained the right to life, liberty and property. Infact the state was created to protect these three inalienable rights of the individuals.**

**As for as the right to life is concerned, Locke regards it as the most sacred right which could be violated only by God and not by man. Men according to Locke are created by God to live in this world during His pleasure and not during the pleasure of man. Therefore, no man can have the right to destroy another's life; nor has a man the right to destroy his own life. Locke includes right to Health in right to life.**

**As for as the right to Liberty is concerned, Locke says that a man's right to Liberty is his right to do whatever he wants so long as that is not incompatible with the law of nature. In other words, he can enjoy Liberty only within the bounds of law of nature. As he himself says, " Where there is no law, there is no Liberty"**

As for as the right to property is concerned, Locke says that a man's right to property is his right to anything with which he has mixed his labour, provided he makes good use of it, since nothing was made by God for men to spoil or destroy.

Apparently, Locke does not advocate an unlimited right of property to man. There are three important limitations on the ownership of property. The first is the labour limitation which is that a person can acquire only that much of common property with which he has mixed his labour. The second limitation is the sufficiency limitation which enjoins a man to acquire only as much as is required by him and leave "enough and as good" for others. The third limitation is the "spoilage limitation" which requires that a man should acquire a thing only if he can make good use of it, since nothing was made by God for man to spoil or destroy. If one takes more he invades his neighbour's share, which is prohibited by law of nature.

All these limitations prove to be artificial once the money is introduced. This is because money enables a man to accumulate huge property without spoiling. Possession of more money also enables a person to buy more wage labourers and with the utilization of more labour, labour limitation becomes meaningless. Therefore, Locke the father of liberalism, in reality justifies an unlimited right to (private) property.

Moreover, as one of the purposes of government is to protect the private property of the individuals, it follows that the state cannot take away the property of individuals or tax them without their consent. The American slogan, "no taxation without representation" is Lockean in character.

It is pertinent to mention here that Locke sometimes uses right to property for all the three rights together that is right to life right to Liberty and right to property.

## **J.S Mill (1806-1878): Views on Liberty**

John Stuart Mill is popular mostly for his views in the defence of individual liberty and individuality. He is also regarded as the supporter of both negative and positive

**Liberty.** He has expressed his views on Liberty in his classic essay titled on Liberty. According to Mill Liberty or freedom is essential for the overall development of an individual. Without Liberty an individual's mental or moral and intellectual faculties get dwarfed. Just as a person's muscles get a harmed when they are not exercised, his mental and moral faculties also get harmed if they are not the exercised. Liberty enables a person to exercise these faculties and thereby prevent their deterioration and ensure their smooth development.

**Mill specifically defends three categories of Liberties;**

- 1. freedom of thought and expression**
- 2. freedom of action and**
- 3. freedom of Association**

**As far as freedom of thought and expression is concerned, Mill suggests a very simple but powerful principle. According to him, " if all mankind minus one were of one opinion and only one person was of the contrary opinion mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind". Mill recommends absolute Liberty in the sphere of thought and expression. According to him, even if one's opinion is unorthodox, government or public must not suppress that opinion for three reasons:**

- 1. The unorthodox opinion may be true while the accepted opinion on a particular matter may be wrong. In that case silencing of an opinion means depriving mankind of its benefits.**
- 2. Even if the accepted opinion is true its truthfulness will be reinforced by the expression of contrary wrong opinion.**
- 3. Free expression of contradictory opinions would be conducive to the destruction of Untrue elements of our beliefs and reinforcement of the true elements.**

**As for as Freedom of Action and Freedom of Association is concerned, Mill recommends some restrictions for preventing harm there from. He draws a distinction between two types of actions of men; a. Self-regarding actions and b. Other regarding actions. In case of self regarding actions---that is the actions that don't affect the society or Community, Mill suggests complete Liberty to the individuals. On the**

other hand, in case of other regarding actions - that is the actions that do affect the society, Mill suggests that the society or Community has a right to limit the freedom of an individual, if his freedom causes harm to the society or any of its members. Though Mill categorizes human actions into self-regarding and other regarding actions, in practice almost all self regarding actions become other regarding actions. It is extremely difficult to find any action of an individual which does not affect the society. Because of this reason Professor E M Barker has dubbed Mill as the 'Prophet of empty Liberty.'

Finally, Mill defends freedom of Association on three grounds;

a. A particular thing may be done better by individuals or their voluntary associations than by the government.

b. Allowing individuals to get together to do something, even if they don't do that thing as well as the government might do that, is still better for the mental education of these individuals.

c. If we let the government do everything, there is the evil of adding unnecessarily to its power.

### **J.S. Mill; views on Democracy;**

According to J. S. Mill, the best government is not the one which is the most efficient. It is the one that promotes the moral and intellectual qualities of the people as well as uses their capacities for the promotion of common good. This naturally makes democracy as the best form of government, since it is democracy alone that allows people to participate in the process of governance and thereby improve their mental and moral faculties. Moreover, it is democracy alone that has a mechanism to use the capacities of its populace for common good.

Mill greatly values a representative democracy, in which a body of representatives is elected by universal suffrage. The purpose of the representative body is to articulate the

needs and concerns of the people (electorate) through free and open discussion. However, the representatives will not always draft the legislation themselves. Mill argues that the task of governing modern large nations is sufficiently complex as to require a high level of technical knowledge. Therefore, he suggests that expert civil servants shall conduct many governmental tasks, including legislation under the supervision or directions of the representatives. Mill also encourages a high degree of local government, and as much public participation in government as is practicable. According to Mill, a representative democracy is also the most effective way to organize the capacities of the citizens for the common good. He envisions the best and the wisest rising to the top of the government as the people to choose their best (representatives) to represent them. Moreover, Mill believes that in a representative democracy the leading intellects of the Society, even if out of office, will play a role in governing the society without attempting to dominate it. Further, Mill is of the opinion that there is no form of government which is appropriate in all times and places. Rather, governments must be tailored to the people they are to govern. While representative democracy is the best in the Civilized World, there are many people who are unfit for exercising the liberty that democracy offers. Therefore, Mill argues that "despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the aim is to improve the subjects". Enlightened despotism can teach the crucial lesson of obedience to the uncivilized people.

Mill also feared that democracy had a tendency to turn into a majoritarian tyranny. He wants the citizens to be vigilant enough to prevent the representative government from snatching their liberties. According to him, civil liberty was in greater danger in democracies than in non-democracy because of the complacency and non-seriousness of the citizens in a democracy.

**Rousseau on origin of inequality:**

Rousseau is regarded as one of the chief inspirers of French revolution. He was also an ardent supporter of individual liberty and direct democracy. His views on the origin of inequality are contained in his essay, "Discourse on the origin of Inequality". According to him, inequality is a product of society (civil society). Before the emergence of civil society, there was no inequality in the 'state of nature'. According to him, the natural man lived a wandering life without any fixed abode or property. The natural man was a Noble Savage who lived a happy carefree and contented life with very few easily appeasing needs. The natural man was a creature of peaceful ignorance having no conception of right and wrong, good and bad or vice and virtue. He had no property and hence each was equal and as free as others. In a nutshell before the emergence of Civil Society there was perfect happiness, perfect equality and perfect freedom in the state of nature. However all this happiness, freedom and equality disappeared once men left the state of nature and entered into the Civil Society. For Rousseau, it was not a conscious or pre-planned act which brought men out of the state of nature and into the Civil Society. Things simply began to happen and it was more by accident than by design. According to Rousseau it was all very simple, " the first man who after enclosing a piece of land took it upon himself to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe was the real founder of Civil Society." Thus, the origin of property and Civil Society like many momentous developments, were matters of chance. The emergence of property led to the destruction of equality, to create Superior-subordinate relationship in the society. The great institution of inequality according to Rousseau is then private property.

What troubles Rousseau the most, is not so much the social as the psychological consequences of life when property and inequality hold control. The social consequences of inequality and property are that Society gets divided into rich and poor classes and value comes to be attached to social status in terms of material possessions. The psychological consequences of inequality and property are that men tend to acquire the unnatural traits of jealousy, selfishness and lust for power. All these traits produce conflict rather than cooperation, envy and malice rather than love and affection in the society. Human beings begin to calculate their own selfish interests rather than thinking about their fellows. Worst of all, says Rousseau, with the emergence of inequality reason itself becomes perverted. Not only do people begin to use their reason to calculate their own advantage at the expense of others, reason becomes merely

**another source of vanity. Learning and Knowledge are acquired, not for their own sake but to demonstrate one's own intellectual superiority.**

### **Hobbes; For or against the State:**

**Hobbes builds a strong case in support of the ability of the state to fulfil diverse needs of man, including his all-important needs of survival or security and development. Hobbes expresses his views in his book, Leviathan. Hobbes assumes that prior to the emergence of State, people lived without a common sovereign power in what he terms as the "state of nature". Hobbes gives a gloomy picture of this state of nature. According to him, man's behaviour in the state of nature demonstrates that man is extremely selfish and egoistic by Nature. On account of this selfishness, self-preservation becomes the chief motive behind all human conduct in the state of nature. And since the resources in the state of nature are not plenty, man's desire for self-preservation makes him to do whatever he can, to ensure his preservation or survival. Self-help and 'Might is right' is the principle of action in the State of nature. In the absence of a common Sovereign Power, Man relies on his own powers to ensure his own Survival or self-preservation. The desire for self-preservation, thus, becomes a desire for power and in the words of Hobbes " life is a perpetual and restless desire for power after power that ceases only in death". Consequently the state of nature turns into a state of war ---- war of all against all. Man lives under constant fear of death in the State of nature.**

**In such a condition, Hobbes says, "there is no place for industry because the fruit thereof is uncertain and that there is no art, no culture, no commodious living..... and what is worst of all, the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."**

By depicting such a gloomy picture of the state of nature, Hobbes wants to tell his readers that how worthless life becomes if there is no State (or the State is too weak). Man's own survival is uncertain in the absence of a State and there is no hope of industrialization and development or progress outside of State.

A State with a strong Sovereign at its helm of affairs establishes Law and Order and peace in the society. And by establishing peace, not only does it ensure survival or security of each individual living within its territory; it also increases the prospects of growth and development or progress. Hobbes, further says that since man's inherent selfishness is very strong, a State with weaker Sovereign authority, may not be able to prevent him from resorting to violence for fulfilling his selfish interests. Hence, he advocates a state with a powerful Sovereign at its helm to keep the selfish individuals in awe. According to him, "Covenants without the sword are but words and of no strength to secure a man at all". In a nutshell, Hobbes is a strong supporter of a State with absolute sovereignty----a leviathan State.

### **Karl Marx (1818-1883) -----State: for or against;**

No other Western political thinker has had such a deep influence on his readers as Marx had. It was because of the influence of his ideas that the world remained divided into two blocs (the Capitalist bloc and the Communist bloc) for nearly 45 years from 1945 to 1989.

Marx wrote several works with "Communist Manifesto" (co-authored by F.Engels) and Das Capital as the most important. Writing at a time when liberalism (as a philosophy) and Capitalism (as a system of Life), had become dominant in Europe, Marx (along with Engels) questioned the viability and validity of these isms in his writings. Marx is particularly famous for his concepts of Historical materialism and class Struggle.

As for his views on State are concerned, Marx regards it as part of the economic system that exists in a class based society. According to him, the need of the state arises when a society gets divided into dominant and dependent classes on the basis of ownership of property. The economically dominant class needs the institution of state to maintain its dominance. In a class based society (Capitalist Society), State exists to



support and impart authority to the property owning class. In his own words, "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie".

Marx thus rejected the belief of the liberal thinkers that state is a neutral or impartial institution meant for resolving disputes or conflicts in a society. For him, state is a partisan institution that promotes the interests of the economically dominant class alone. In a capitalist society, the state's Chief function is to encourage the basic conditions necessary for the security and promotion of the capitalist system. Marx also believes that the basis of state is force and coercion and not the consent or will of the people. According to him, State maintains order in the society not because it is able to secure the willing obedience of its subjects, but because it uses its coercive power to suppress the dependent class. Moreover, the state uses its ideological power to create an illusion of consent of the governed as to offer moral justification for its existence.

In a nutshell, the State becomes an instrument of exploitation and suppression of the economically dependent class (Proletariat), at the hands of the dominant class (bourgeoisie). For Marx, such a partisan state cannot survive for long. It is bound to disappear or wither away once the dependent class becomes strong enough to revolt against it. He also believed that the dependent class or the proletariat will be able to establish its dictatorship for a brief period after bringing about the downfall of the capital state through violent revolution. According to him, dictatorship of the proletariat will soon pave the way for the establishment of communism.....a class less society where private property will disappear and the State will become redundant.

In short, Marx, doesn't accord any importance to the institution of the State.

## **Theory of surplus value:**

**Before Marx, David Ricardo and John Locke had argued that the value of any commodity is determined by the labour expended in its production. Marx agreed with them and argued that a useful article has value only because human labour has been embodied in it. And those who expend labour in the production of any commodity have a right to the full value of their production. The capitalists, however, are unwilling to allow labourers the full return for their work. Through rents, interest, and profit they extort from the worker a part of his production.**

**In a more simple sense, a labourer is able to produce in a day more than is necessary to his own Survival, but he is paid by the employer (Capitalist) a wage not more than subsistence level of existence. The difference is called Surplus value and it is usurped by the employer or the Capitalist.**

**Marx explained it in another manner. According to him the owner of money or the Capitalist buys labour power at its value (at the cost a worker needs to sustain himself and his family and not more). Having bought the labour power, the owner of money is entitled to use it. He makes the labourer to work for the whole day ---say for 12 hours but pays him for 6 hours only. The unpaid value of six hours of labourer's work, taken by the Capitalist is called Surplus value. Marx used the theory of surplus value to highlight the exploitative character of the capitalist system.**

## **Class War or Class Struggle:**

**This is one of the core ideas that Marx and Engels sought to elaborate. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels write, “the history of all hitherto existing Society is the history of class struggle. Freeman and slave, Patrician and plebeian, Lord and Serf, Guild-master and Journeymen, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in**

**constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes"**

**According to Marx, the struggle between classes are sometimes hidden and sometimes open, but they are always in process, even if the battle itself is not apparent to the combatants. What transforms one section of a society into a class of oppressors and another into a class of oppressed is the distribution and organization of productive property or means of production (private property). Those who own the means of production become the dominant class (Haves) and those who don't own anything except their labour become the dependent class (Have not's). In order to ensure their survival, the have not's have to labour in the agricultural Fields or factories owned by the haves or the dominant class (depending upon the mode of production). But the dominant class doesn't pay them the full wages of their labour. The labourers are made to work for 8 hours and paid for four hours only. The dominant class also uses the state machinery, which it controls, for maintaining its exploitative sway over the dependent class.**

**Since the economically dominant class continuously seeks to increase its profits or wealth by paying lesser and lesser wages to the labourers, a class contradiction and class antagonism is bound to arise. This class antagonism according to Marx continues to increase with the increase of the exploitation of the dependent class, till a stage is reached when the internal contradictions of the system as well as the revolutionary consciousness of the dependent class( stemming mainly from its numerical strength) causes the latter to overthrow the existing system through a violent revolution. In other words as Andrew Hacker puts it, "What causes that struggle to break into open Revolution is the eventual realization that technological progress has rendered obsolete the prevailing system of ownership".**

**As noted earlier, Marx and Engels view the entire history of the world as a history of class struggle or class war. But how far is it true. When we look into the causes of a number of wars that have taken place on this Earth, it becomes abundantly clear that almost all of these wars erupted because of other reasons and not necessarily because of the antagonistic interests of Haves and Have not's. The war between Alexander and Dara, war between Babur and Ibrahim Lodhi or between Hemayun and Sher Shah Suri**

and many more wars were not class wars. Wars that have been fought between status quoists' and revisionist states may be in some indirect sense taken as a confirmation of Marx's view.

### **Historical Materialism:**

It is also known as materialistic interpretation of History. Marx develops his theory of historical materialism after rejecting Hegel's theory of idealism. Hegel had held that idea was the ultimate reality and that the movement in history resulted from contradictions inherent in ideas which were resolved through thesis-antithesis -and-synthesis. Hegel believed that the movement in History was a dialectical movement of ideas. Marx turned it upside down by asserting that contradictions in matter and not ideas produced change in history. For Marx history was the product of dialectical materialism or dialectics of matter and not dialectical idealism. In the words of Marx "it is not our Consciousness that determines our existence rather it is our existence which determines our consciousness". According to Marx in order to understand history in a scientific manner, we have to understand, what was the first historical act, thinking or production whether reason has a priority or appetite. For Marx, in order to make history, one has to live, in order to live one has to eat and in order to one has to work or produce. This establishes the superiority of production over thinking, the superiority of appetite over reason. Thus, according to Marx action of production is the most basic action and all other human activities are secondary. He explained this by giving the base-superstructure model. In a nutshell, claiming to have found the science of society, known as historical materialism, Marx (and Engels) argued that human society has been evolving from a lower level of existence to a higher level through changes wrought by men to increase production through technology and science. However, the changes in production resulted in changes in the relations of productions between those who worked and produced a surplus and those who appropriated the surplus; hence class antagonisms which resulted in class struggles.

The materialism which Marx set forth has often been considered subversive of morality and ethics.

## **Dialectical Materialism:**

**Dialectical materialism may be understood as Karl Marx metaphysical perspective, a framework of History and to a larger extent reality. Having studied Hegel's thought extensively, Marx found his use of dialectics as model for stages of development powerfully pertinent to unfolding of History. However, whereas Hegel emphasized the ideal as the Ultimate Reality unfolding dialectically and manifesting itself phenomenally as gross material and historical change, Marx sought to reverse this metaphysics, identifying material change and processes as the heart of historical development and the seed from which the Ideal would germinate. History develops dialectically, that is to say by a succession of opposing thesis and antithesis followed by their synthesis, which contains part of each original thesis. For Marx, this dialectical process would necessarily be a material one, developments in the basic structure of economic life, such as those in production, the division of labour and technology, all have enormous impact on the super structure of political, legal, social, cultural, psychological and religious dimensions of human society. Marx illustrates this assertion in the 'poverty of philosophy', observing that, "the hand-mill gives you Society with the feudal lord, the steam-mill (gives you) the society with the industrial capitalist"**

**Marx and Engels' stages of development, or modes of production, build on one another in succession, each brought about by a development in technology and social arrangement: primitive communism with communal ownership of resources; slavery with private ownership of Labour; feudalism as a further development with private ownership of land; followed by capitalism with the private ownership of the machinery of production accompanied by the further simultaneous expansion and segmentation of private property; and lastly socialism and communism as a return to communal ownership of the means of production.**

## **Michael Bakunin: For or against the State:**

**Mikhail Aleksndrovich Bakunin was born in Tver, a province near Moscow in 1814 and died in Switzerland in 1876. He was a radical intellectual who became a strong advocate of anarchism in Europe in the 19th century. He was a contemporary of Marx with whom he competed for leadership of the First International. Although a prolific writer, Bakunin, according to his critics was not a systematic thinker or a philosopher like Marx. In contrast to Marx, however, Bakunin had won his reputation chiefly as an activist rather than a theorist of rebellion. He was a kind of a universal revolutionist. He has a distinction of being at once the spiritual and intellectual sponsor of French syndicalism, Italian and Spanish anarchism and Russian terrorism.**

**As for as his views on State are concerned, Bakunin, like other anarchists viewed it as an unnecessary evil. According to him, coercion and despotism was the essence of State and that most democratic devices were of no avail in modifying this essential character of the state. This coercion and despotism in turn takes its roots from the belief that most people are incapable of self-government and must submit to an imposed wisdom and justice from above. Such a state naturally functions better if the people who are dominated are also stupefied and dulled in their thoughts and feelings. The state requires for its existence that people be kept ignorant, incapable and of low status, so that the ruling class and the state can claim to be leading humanity towards a common good.**

**Bakunin also argues that states necessarily involve class domination.**

**He agrees with Marx that the economically powerful class controls the state to further the exploitation of workers and other marginalised sections of the society.**

**Bakunin further observes that all the states- democratic, autocratic and theocratic are same so far as their control and coercion is concerned. Every type of state is desirous of intensifying its control over the inexperienced and innocent citizens and, when obstructed, resorts to repressive measures.**

**The state is, therefore, the most condemnable political institution and it must be destroyed.**

**Bakunin believed that the state will be destroyed by a revolution led by the peasantry and lumpen proletariat---a mass of uncivilized, disinherited and illiterate people. Such a mass of people will be driven by an instinctive passion for Justice and by an unquenchable thirst for revenge and they will not be corrupted by capitalist ideas and civilization.**

**Bakunin's vision of Revolution was of an all-embracing upheaval, a true revolt of the masses, including besides the working class, the darkest elements of the Society - the lumpen proletariat, the peasantry, the unemployed and the Outlaws - all pitted against those who thrive on their misery and enslavement.**

### **Some very short answer type questions.**

**There can be many more, the purpose is to just give u an idea about how to identify such questions.**

**Here are some:**

***General Will;* A concept attributed to Rousseau, it refers to the genuine interest all a Collective body, equivalent to the common good ; the will of all provided each person acts selflessly.**

***Historical Materialism:* A theory given by Marx; it holds that material or economic conditions ultimately structure law, politics, culture and other aspects of social existence.**

***Natural rights:*** God given rights that are fundamental to human beings and are therefore inalienable. Chief exponent of natural rights theory was John Locke.

***Popular Sovereignty:*** The principle that there is no higher authority than the will of the people. A concept, first given by Rousseau.

***Proletariat:*** A Marxist term, denoting a class that subsists through the sale of its labour power. A worker class in a capitalist system.

***State of nature;*** A Society, without that political authority. A concept used by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau to describe the situation before the emergence of a sovereign State.

***Utilitarianism:*** A moral philosophy that equates pleasure with good and pain with evil and aims to achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Bentham and JS Mill were utilitarian philosophers.

***Demagogue;*** a political leader who has control over the masses is based on his ability to strike the emotions of the people. Such leaders are found in democracies.

***Dictatorship of the proletariat:*** A market system, denoting the transitional phase between the collapse of capitalism and the establishment of full communism.

***Dialectic:*** A process of interaction between two competing forces giving rise to a higher stage of development. It was a method used by philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Marx etc in modern times to arrive at conclusions.



***Consent:*** Assent or permission, in politics, usually an agreement to be Governor or ruled. A concept popularized by John Locke.

***Communism:*** the principle of the common ownership of property (or Common ownership of wives in case of Plato's communism of wives). It also very often refers to movements or regimes based on Marxist principles.

***Capitalism:*** a system where wealth is owned privately and economic life is organized according to Market principles.

***Bourgeois:*** a Marxist term, denoting the ruling class of a capitalist Society, the owners of productive wealth or means of production.