

HSST POLITICAL SCIENCE Part I

Module 1 Contratualists

Modern Political Thought



Political theory in the western world goes back at least to the time of the ancient Greeks, and most other cultures have a tradition of thinking about government and political rule that in some cases is even older than

the western tradition. However, we are not looking at the whole history of political thought in this subject guide, we are not even offering a representative selection of the history of political thought, instead we are concentrating on the modern period.

The modern period and modernity is a peculiarly elusive idea and often seems to mean little more than '**not ancient or medieval**': in part, that is how we will use the idea in this subject guide.

The modern period, for our purposes, covers thinkers from the time of the European Reformation until the middle of the nineteenth century, after which time we get the development of academic political science and a new approach to the role of political theory.

An overview of themes and theories

The main task of each chapter in the subject guide is to provide an exposition of the main arguments of each thinker. However, each thinker makes use of broad patterns of argument that can be used to link or contrast groups of thinkers. In what follows I provide a brief glossary or

explanation of some of these broad theories. Once again it will be for you to decide how closely any particular thinker fits within one of these theories.

Individualism

In one sense individualism is the most elusive of theories since all theories that do not deny the obvious fact that there are individuals are individualists. However, for our purposes there are two important ways in which theories can be individualist. The first is methodological.

A theory is methodologically individualist when it uses the idea of the individual person as the most basic unit of social explanation. On such a view all other forms of association such as family, church, culture, nation, state or civilisation are explained through the actions and choices of the individuals that compose them. The individual is primary and the complex association is secondary.

A good example of a thinker who is methodologically individualist is Hobbes, but we could also include Locke, Mill and, more controversially, Rousseau. The second sense in which a theory can be individualist normatively or ethically. Ethical individualists

claim that the basic unit of moral importance is the human individual and his or her rights.

Some theories can be ethically individualist without being methodologically individualist. But thinkers who combine both positions are Locke and Mill.

Communitarianism

Communitarian theories are the opposite of individualist theories and can also take two forms. Methodologically communitarian theories give explanatory priority to the group, whether this be family, nation culture or class, as opposed to the individual. An obvious exemplar of this position is Marx, but we can also include Hegel. Both claim that the human individual emerges through social relations such as class relations or through the idea of the state as an organic (growing and interrelated transgenerational) community. Yet one could be a methodologically communitarian thinker and still attach primary ethical significance to the person and not the state, nation or culture. Some argue that this is actually Hegel's position.

Ethical communitarians on the other hand claim that individuals are the bearers of ethical significance only because of the roles and relations they enjoy. Consequently, communities such as family, clan, nation or state can have a prior claim on an individual. Such theories tend to emphasize duty over rights and explain the idea of rights through membership of particular communities, such as states, which exist before the person and will persist long after the person. Some of the most fundamental debates in political theory takes place between individualists and communitarians.

Contractarianism

This is an ethically individualist theory that explains the origin of the state or other institutions and its authority on the basis of an agreement (contract) between individuals. Such individuals are usually said to reside in a state of nature. This is a condition free from any of the institutions, structures, laws and obligations of politics and the state. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau are perhaps the most famous contract theorists, but the idea is still used among some contemporary political philosophers. The role of the contract, promise or agreement is the feature that differs between contract theories. The social contract is most commonly seen as a hypothetical device. That means it does not actually have to take place. We can treat the emergence and authorization of political sovereignty as if it emerged from an agreement, even if we have no evidence of such a contract ever having been entered into. This seems to be the approach taken by Hobbes and Rousseau. However, Locke at least seems to suggest that the original contract to established civil society must have taken place at some remote time in history.

Hypothetical contract theories are the most popular because they can apply across generations and avoid the main problem that applies to historical contracts. If a contract or agreement is historical, then it raises a question about why future generations after those who made the agreement should be bound by it. If your great-grandmother promised to do something, does that place an obligation on you to continue doing what she promised?

Utilitarianism

Social contract arguments are sometimes used to explain and justify

morality, but there is another great individualist ethical theory, namely utilitarianism. Utilitarians hold two positions, the first is consequentialist, and the second concerns the conception of the good in terms of which consequences are judged. Consequentialists believe that the object of moral obligation and appraisal is consequences or states of affairs and not motives or the character of the agent. A bad person can still bring about good consequences, just as a conscientious individual can bring about appalling consequences.

The second dimension to utilitarian theories is the way in which consequences are assessed. Consequences are assessed in terms of the amount of some good-making property. There is a variety of such properties such as sensations of pleasure or happiness, welfare or the satisfaction of desires or preferences. John Stuart Mill, one of the most important utilitarian theorists thought that the good was the maximization of pleasurable states and the minimization of painful ones, so he argues that the criteria for judging actions or policies is to identify which one 'maximizes the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. The more of this property produced by an act or policy the better the consequences.

Most utilitarian theories are maximizing theories: the best act or the right act is the one that maximizes good consequences. Utilitarian theories developed following the decline of natural law theories of morality.

Natural law

Natural law theories claim that the basis of our most fundamental moral and political obligations are derived from a law that applies to us by virtue of our natures, and not because of any prior agreement or because we are subject to coercive authority. We can discover this law of nature simply through the exercise of reason. All we have to do is reflect on the kinds of being we are and our place in the world and we can come to

know our obligations. Natural law theorists distinguish between the law of nature that is accessible to all through reason and divine law that is revealed in a sacred text such as the Bible or Koran. Theorists differ on the content or substance of natural law. For Hobbes, the law of nature is merely a generalization from human experience of the tendency of human

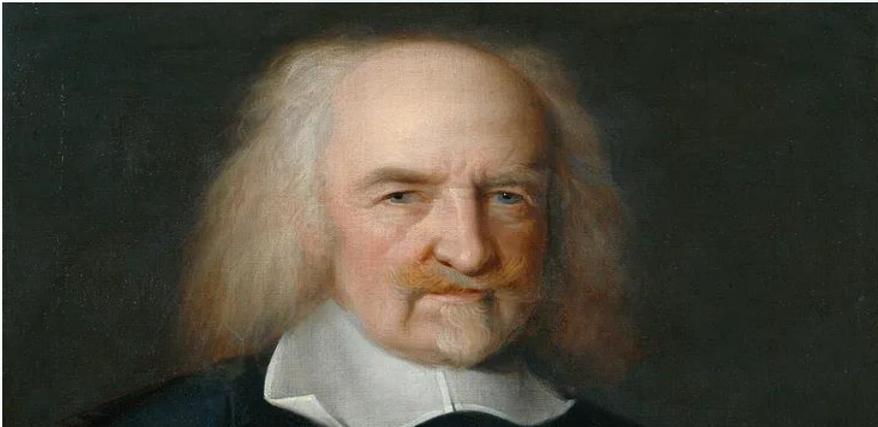
beings to preserve themselves. For Hobbes, then, the law of nature is a descriptive law, like a law of psychology or physics. For Locke, on the other hand, the law of nature is a moral law that imposes strict duties upon individuals. The problem for natural law theories is that we can disagree about our natures and that will affect what we take our obligations to be. Furthermore, although it is called law, natural law seems to be incomplete in respect of its carrying a clear and authoritative sanction. So although natural law theorists like to claim there is law prior to the state, they still rely on the state and positive law to turn natural law claims into real commands sanctioned by the threat of punishment.

Communism

Most people will associate communism with the ideology of the communist party as expounded by Karl Marx and developed by Lenin and other twentieth-century leaders such as Mao. In this sense Communism is almost an historical curiosity following the collapse of 'really existing socialism' in 1989. However, for our purposes communism means more than the teachings of Marxism–Leninism. It means a society or mode of existence without private property or ownership. Marx presupposes communism as a condition for overcoming the exploitation and alienation of the wage labor system. However, communism also describes the situation in Locke's state of nature before the initial acquisition of private property.

Rousseau also uses the idea of communism to describe man's natural condition before the discovery of technology (agriculture and metallurgy). However, whereas Rousseau and Marx regard communism as a good thing corrupted by acquisitiveness, other thinkers such as Locke see communism as a bad thing because, given natural scarcity, it creates conflict and disorder

Thomas Hobbes



- ❖ Thomas Hobbes presents himself as the first true political philosopher, the first to offer exact knowledge of justice, sovereignty, and citizenship.

ENTRRI

- ❖ Hobbes claims, moreover, that his systematic political science will revolutionize political practice, enabling us to build more stable, peaceful, and productive societies.
- ❖ In order to achieve these results, though, Hobbes must promote a view of the proper scope of politics that is narrower than that of the ancients. By focusing political energies on the preservation of life and its comforts, Hobbes helps to institute the proposal made earlier by Machiavelli:
- ❖ that politics should satisfy certain basic, morally neutral needs rather than aim to organize us around contentious principles. Hobbes emphasizes several ideas that have become central to modern politics and modern political science. He argues that human beings are not naturally social or political, that the state of nature is a state of war, and that we must self-consciously create a government that is based on mutual consent and that presupposes a fundamental equality among its members.
- ❖ These ideas are most comprehensively set forth in the **Leviathan (1651)**, which text serves as the basis for this introduction to Hobbes's thought.

Hobbes's Political Science

Hobbes's claim to found the first true political science should be understood against the background of the political thinkers he seeks to supplant, chiefly Aristotle. Hobbes is dissatisfied with the wisdom Aristotle claims to gain from considering multiple opinions about the good, remarking that hundreds of years of philosophical conversation have made no discernible progress on this question. Hobbes aims rather to elaborate a definitive and unambiguous science of the political good. Indeed, he argues that reading Aristotle serves no purpose but to justify the ambitions of rebellious young men.

Because we can know completely and with certainty only what we make and control, Hobbes gives an account of political order that portrays it as a self-conscious construction, an artifice we craft to remove ourselves from a pre-political state of nature. In order to achieve the exact knowledge for which he aims,

Hobbes must limit his scientific claims to the implications that can be deduced from this decision to institute a political order, or “**commonwealth.**” His political science proper therefore constitutes only the section of the Leviathan that concerns the “consequences” that follow from this choice, namely, the rights and duties of the sovereign and of the subjects that are necessary to maintain this basic political agreement. This choice, however, follows upon our passions and our speech, especially our calling “good” the object of our desires, and pleasure the appearance of it.

The State of Nature

- Hobbes begins his discussion with a description of human passions and speech, our basic motions. Following this, Hobbes develops his account of the state of nature from the claim that human beings are naturally equal.
- By this he means that each individual possesses the natural right to preserve himself, and furthermore the natural right to claim all things, or seek all power, that he judges necessary to this end.
- Moreover, Hobbes writes, in the state of nature we are, for practical purposes, equal in physical and mental capacity, since no one is strong or smart enough to defend himself with certainty against the threats that arise from the efforts of other individuals to preserve themselves.
- According to Hobbes, this rough equality of ability leads each person to have an equal hope of acquiring good things for himself.
- As individuals strive to accumulate goods, they compete with each other, and consequently create an atmosphere of distrust.
- The attempt to acquire things, and to preserve them from the encroachments of others, causes us to try to dominate and control those around us. Furthermore, Hobbes observes, some people care particularly to be known as that sort who can dominate—they are vainglorious or prideful individuals who are unhappy if they are not recognized as superior.
- These three things—competition, distrust, and the desire for glory—throw humankind into a state of war, which is for Hobbes the natural condition of

E ▶ ENTRI

human life, the situation that exists whenever natural passions are unrestrained. This state of war should be distinguished from wars as we usually experience them, for in the natural state of war every individual faces every other individual as an enemy; it is the “war of every man against every man.” **The total absence of collaboration makes us miserable, and renders life “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”**

- Hobbes’s description of the state of nature proposes that what human beings want above all is to preserve their lives and their goods, and what they fear above all is violence at the hands of others.
- This desire to preserve ourselves against the threat of violent death is the core of Hobbesian psychology. Hobbes suggests that his account will be ratified by honest introspection—after all, why else would we lock our doors at night?

The Social Contract

- ❖ Once the misery of the natural condition becomes clear, it is evident that something must be done to change it. The first step is for individuals to decide to seek peace and to make the arrangements necessary to attain and preserve it. It becomes clear that the only way to have peace is for each individual to give up his natural right to acquire and preserve everything in whatever manner he sees fit.
- ❖ As Hobbes stipulates, this must be a collective endeavor, since it only makes sense for an individual to give up his right to attack others if everyone else agrees to do the same. He calls this collective renunciation of each individual’s right to all things the “**social contract.**” The social contract inverts the state of nature while also building upon some key passions responsible for the state of nature: it amounts to a more intelligent way to preserve oneself and safely acquire goods.
- ❖ Hobbes presents the social contract in the context of elaborating his “laws of nature,” which are the steps we must take to leave the state of nature. In calling

these rules **“laws of nature,”** Hobbes significantly changes the traditional concept of natural law, in which nature offers moral guidance for human behavior.

- ❖ By contrast, Hobbes’s laws of nature are not obligatory in his state of nature, since, as he makes clear, seeking peace and keeping contracts in the state of nature would be self-destructive and absurd. In other words, acting against the laws of nature cannot simply be called unnatural or unjust—for Hobbes, nothing is naturally just, unjust, or blameworthy. Justice only exists as a convention, in the context of a civil society.

The Leviathan, or the Sovereign

Particularly because there is no natural sanction for justice, we need to institute some guarantee that everyone involved in the social contract will keep his word. Hobbes argues that individuals require a “visible power to keep them in awe,” to remind them of the purpose of the social contract and to force them, for fear of punishment, to keep their promises. This power must also be sufficient to keep in check the yearning for superiority of those who desire honor or glory. Hobbes calls the power necessary to transform the desire for a social contract into a commonwealth the sovereign, the Leviathan, or the “king of the proud.”

The sovereign power is created when each individual surrenders his private strength to a single entity, which thereby acquires the means to keep everyone in obedience. Every individual must also surrender his private opinion about public issues to the sovereign—for to have sufficient power to safeguard the contract, the sovereign must have the authority to decide what is necessary to keep it, and what constitutes a transgression of it.

The relation of the sovereign to the subject is not a contract. Rather, as Hobbes makes clear, the individual must understand his will to be identical with the sovereign will, since one who desires peace must logically will whatever is necessary for peace to be maintained. The “real unity” that the subjects and the

sovereign comprise is dramatically expressed in the picture found on the cover of the Leviathan, in which one finds a huge figure literally composed of small individuals.

Although it is commonly assumed that the Leviathan is a king, Hobbes makes clear that the sovereign power can be composed of one person, several, or many—in other words, the Leviathan can equally well describe a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy. The only requirement that Hobbes sets for sovereignty is that the entity has absolute power to defend the social contract and decide what is necessary for its defense.

Religion in the Commonwealth

One power that Hobbes insists the sovereign must possess is the authority to determine the public observance of religion. In Hobbes's opinion, religion can be one of the chief threats to public peace, since it can validate authorities other than those designated by the sovereign. Hobbes is concerned both with Church authorities who make spiritual or moral claims with political intent, and also with the appeal to private conscience, which Hobbes argues is essentially the claim that an individual opinion should take priority over the common agreement represented by the political sovereign.

Hobbes attempts to counter the religious threat to public peace by drawing a strict distinction between private belief and public worship, and then attempting to render private belief politically ineffectual while submitting the form of public worship to the decision of the sovereign.

Hobbes tries to make private belief politically neutral by encouraging skepticism: his account of the human mind makes us doubtful of what we know, and his reading of Scripture emphasizes the passages that insist on the mysteriousness of God's will. Hobbes ultimately pares back Christianity to the personal belief that

“Jesus is the Christ,” who will come—in some future time—to reign on earth. In the meantime, Hobbes insists, we should follow Romans 13 in recognizing that all authority comes from God, and obey the civil sovereign.

Hobbes likens the obedience a subject owes the sovereign to that of a monk to the pope. Yet there is a glaring difference: in the Hobbesian commonwealth, subjects owe only outward obedience to the commands of the sovereign. Subjects must be allowed to believe whatever they want (in part because persecution would unnecessarily disturb public peace), as long as they do not try to influence public argument with their personal beliefs.

Hobbes, Liberalism, and Modern Politics

- Hobbes’s emphasis on the absolute power of the Leviathan sovereign seems to put his political thought at odds with liberal theory, in which politics is devoted to the protection of individual rights.
- Hobbes nonetheless laid the foundation for the liberal view. His concept of the state of nature grounds politics in the individual’s desire to preserve his life and his goods, and stipulates that the role of government is to serve these ends. Happiness or “felicity” is continual success in obtaining what we desire.
- For Hobbes, the individual has no natural duties toward others or to the common good; obligations are taken up only as necessary means to one’s own ends. Furthermore, Hobbes makes clear that the individual retains his natural right to preserve himself even after entering the commonwealth—he has no obligation to submit himself to capital punishment or likely death in war.
- While Hobbes has a much more limited understanding of individual rights than liberal theorists, his political science launches the argument that the individual has an inviolable right by nature, and also suggests that politics exists to help further the individual’s pursuit of his own happiness.

ENTRRI

- Hobbes begins with the liberal notion of representative government: government represents but does not rule us; its duty is to make our lives and acquisitions safe, not to form our souls.
- Not long after Hobbes's death, John Locke used many of the elements of Hobbes's thought to develop the first full account of modern political liberalism. Although Locke takes pains to distance himself from Hobbes,
- Hobbes's influence can be seen in Locke's account of the state of nature, in his argument that the origin of all legitimate government lies in the consent of the governed, and in his view that the political community should aim to serve basic, common needs (Locke makes the preservation of property central).
- Through Locke, Hobbes indirectly influenced the founders of the United States, who, in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, proclaimed a new kind of politics based on equality and consent, in which the government serves relatively limited and popular aims.

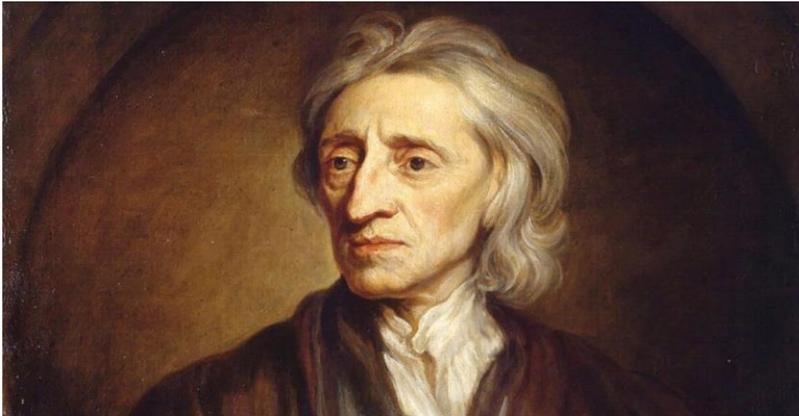
Hobbes's political ideas aroused much controversy in his time, and they continue to be contentious. Some disagree with Hobbes's claim that politics should be viewed primarily as an instrument to serve self-interest, and side with Aristotle in thinking that politics serves both basic needs and higher ends.

On this view, Hobbes's attempt to divert public debate from tackling controversial but fundamental questions hampers our pursuit of wisdom, happiness, and excellence.

Others argue that Hobbes's systematic focus on achievable goals has made possible the security and prosperity that those in modern Western nations enjoy, and furthermore that these conditions give us the leisure and peace to pursue knowledge and excellence in private life.

In either case, Hobbes's contribution to the framework of the modern world makes a study of his work important to understanding our political horizons.

John Locke : Liberal and Revolutionary Thinker



- **John Locke** (1632–1704) was an English philosopher and political theorist.
- He began his career as a scientist and political conservative. Through his employment with the Earl of Shaftesbury Locke became involved in Whig politics and the opposition to James II of England.
- James was the Catholic brother of Charles II and many feared that when he ascended the throne, James would use French troops to impose a Catholic absolutist state on England. Remember that England had been a Protestant country since the Reformation.
- Locke's opposition to James forced him into exile in Holland where he wrote the Two Treatises of Government, among other works. We will not be reading the First Treatise as this is only of historical interest.
- The Second Treatise (from which you will be reading selected chapters) came to be considered by many as the theoretical justification for the
- Glorious Revolution of 1688, in which James II was forced from the throne and William of Orange was appointed king of England.

Locke is important for two reasons

Historians of political thought still argue over how far Locke intended to provide a justification for the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Some argue that his theory is far more radical than the actual Revolution settlement that shaped British politics.

Other political theorists argue that whether or not Locke was a Whig he provides a conception of constitutional government that is limited to the protection of individuals and their rights, especially their rights to life, liberty and property.

Locke's Second Treatise is claimed as one of the foundational texts of political liberalism. Locke's liberalism is seen as an answer to the problem of political absolutism that subjects individual subjects and their liberty to the absolute authority of the king or in modern terms, the state.

The problem of absolutism

- ❖ For Locke the problem of absolutism was both historical (or for him a political problem) and a theoretical problem.
- ❖ The Stuart kings believed in the divine right of kings to rule as they wished. However, although the king could rule without consulting Parliament on matters of law and policy, he was obliged to ask Parliament for money, or new taxes.
- ❖ The Stuart monarchs sought ways of raising revenue without going to Parliament, as it would always place conditions on the vote of new taxes. This would be especially problematic for a Catholic king with a Protestant Parliament.
- ❖ In this context some defenders of monarchical absolutism argued that the king did not need the permission of Parliament to tax, as he was the rightful owner of his realm.
- ❖ This is the argument of Sir Robert Filmer's Patriarcha, which argued that the king was a patriarch, or male head of a family that could be traced back to the descendents of the sons of Noah who inherited the earth following the flood, described in the Book of Genesis.

ENTRI

- ❖ This theory made the realm of the monarch personal property, which is only held at the monarch's discretion by all subsequent landowners. As the king owned all property he could tax without consent – all the money was really his in the first place.
- ❖ Locke sought to challenge Filmer's theory with his new account of the origin of political power and the pre-political origin of private property.

Natural law and natural rights

- ★ Filmer had argued that all men are born into natural subjection – sons to their fathers, and natural subjection is the lot of all mankind, daughters are subject to their father and women to their husbands and eventually even to their sons.
- ★ Subjection to the monarch or political ruler is just as
- ★ natural. Locke challenges this idea, and argues that men are naturally free and equal. He argues this in two senses.
- ★ First, prior to the creation of the state men were actually free and equal. But he adds a further claim (which Hobbes does not) and argues that freedom and equality is a moral relation that exists even after the creation of civil and political society.
- ★ This moral relation of freedom and equality is explained in terms of natural rights to life, liberty and property, which we hold in virtue of our natures.

The state of nature

- Man's natural condition is one of moral equality under the law of nature.
- We all have rights to life, liberty and property that do not depend on the discretion of others.
- As such, we need to explain how political authority arose. No one is born subject to the political authority of another, as this would be a denial of our status as free and equal subjects.

ENTRI

- We are born subject to the natural authority of parents but, Locke is keen to claim, this is different from political power.
- Political power is the right of making law and imposing punishment with a view to protecting property (Second Treatise,). Natural authority applies only to children; once we attain the age of majority our obligations towards our parents change.
- There is no natural political authority. Instead political society
- is an artifact – something that we make, not something that is already
- there. Like Hobbes, Locke uses the idea of a state of nature to explain why we make political society. Unlike Hobbes, Locke's account of the natural conditions are very different.
- For a start it contains sociability and is not a war of all against all. In fact Locke presents an account of the state of nature as one in which property is acquired, enclosed and cultivated, and in which individuals engage in commerce and trade.
- Locke spends a lot of time explaining how we can acquire private property in the state of nature that is before we have political society. He offers two crucial arguments; the labor theory of value, and the 'labor-mixing' argument. We don't need to spend too much time on these arguments, although many commentators spend a lot of time on Locke's theory of property.
- The inconveniences of the state of nature give us a reason to establish political society or the state. But as we are naturally free any notion of political obligation – the duty to obey the state and the law – cannot just be required of us, we must freely choose it. As we have a right of freedom, that freedom can only be given up freely.
- Consequently, the origin of political authority must be an agreement among those subject to it. For this reason, Locke adopts a contract theory.
- It is also clear from his argument and his response to his critics that he thinks this contract must have occurred at some point in history.

ENTRI

- Locke's argument is not a simple hypothetical contract; it must be a real agreement. There are two parts to Locke's contract theory.
- The first part comprises a group of individuals agreeing to form a political society.
- This involves putting their property under public regulation.
- This stage of the agreement is irrevocable.
- Locke's idea is that once a group of people have combined their property into a territorial political community, then that entity is permanent. A state is territorially constituted and prevents its members from transferring property to another state.
- To give an example, the property owners of the City of London could not sell their property to another country such as France, such that France had a small enclave in the heart of Britain's capital city.
- The second stage of the argument is agreeing to submit one's private judgment about the law of nature to a public judgment.
- This public judgment does not have to be a unanimous judgment, but can be a majority decision.
- Locke is aware that his argument seems only to justify the establishment of political authority among the original contractors.
- But if that is the case, how has he rendered political authority consistent with freedom, unless each generation contracts anew?
- Locke's answer is to take a dimension of contractual agreement and make it the primary focus of his account of political legitimacy.
- This dimension is consent. Consent is Locke's most important contribution to contract theory. He then distinguishes between express and tacit consent (Second Treatise,).
- Express consent is straightforward and involves explicit
- agreements such as promises and oaths of allegiance. But of course not all individuals take such oaths, and in Locke's day hardly any Englishman could be said to have expressly consented.
- Locke then introduces the idea of tacit consent.

ENTRI

- This does not have to be given in a conscious agreement; indeed it can be inferred from such familiar acts as enjoying the benefits of a political society or walking along the highway.
- All men have the opportunity to tacitly consent; therefore the law of the land will be consistent with one's freedom. Indeed, you might want to consider whether Locke's account of tacit consent is too successful, so much so that we cannot actually withhold consent!

Sovereign power and the right of resistance

- We can now see Locke's answer to the anarchist – why we need political
- authority and power at all. Locke has also shown us how political
- authority is created through an original contract, and how its legitimacy is confirmed through time by acts of tacit and express consent.
- However, Locke still needs to provide a final answer to absolutists such
- as Filmer and Hobbes, by showing that there is a middle way between absolutism and anarchy. Locke provides this through his account of
- sovereign political power or the state. By using the idea of a trust, Locke wants us to remember that we must give the government considerable scope to interpret what laws are appropriate to secure our civil interests – life, liberty and property.

He also wants to leave open the question of how we choose those to whom we delegate sovereign power. To this end Locke specifies four important constraints on legislative power.

- ★ It cannot be arbitrarily exercised over the people. It is confined to the protection of the civil interests of the people – their lives, liberties and property.
- ★ As such it must be exercised through clear and determinate laws and enforced by independent and known judges. It is the rule of law and not of men.
- ★ • No one can be deprived of her property without consent. So there can be no taxation without consent and representation.

- ★ • The legislature cannot transfer the power of making laws to another body – such as another state or a religious authority. French kings or Catholic popes cannot make English laws
- Each of these constraints is designed to prevent the representative – whether it be a parliament or a monarch – from developing an interest that conflicts with the public interest, and then using that interest to justify denying individuals their freedom or property.
- To further frustrate the idea of arbitrary rule, Locke also suggests a separation between the legislative function and the executive branch of government. This idea was taken up and formalized in the Constitution of the United States of America almost a century later.
- The final part of Locke's theory is the right of resistance (see Second Treatise,).
- Locke acknowledges that the best constitutional plans can be subverted. However, unlike Hobbes, Locke recognizes a right to resist a government that subverts or denies the civil interests of its subjects. So any king or assembly that tried to impose **Locke Second Treatise**

J.J.Rousseau : Critique of Civil Society, theory of General will



- ❖ The primary objective of this is to understand and critically appreciate the political thought of Jean Jacques Rousseau, as well as the influence he had in the historiography of western political thought.
- ❖ Rousseau was a brilliant philosopher, provocative, equally controversial and highly critical of his times. A modern Postmodernist, he inspired the French revolution. He lived in the age of reason, French Enlightenment, and while he attacked the ancien regime,
- ❖ He was also critical of the Enlightenment. He is best remembered for his concept of popular sovereignty, and the theory of General Will, which provide a philosophical justification for democratic governance.
- ❖ Rousseau seems to be straddling two traditions of political theorizing at the same time. While his language belongs to the will and artifice tradition, the import of his writings clearly favors organic theory of state. As a result, his ideas have been interpreted in diverse and often contradictory ways; for he is at once an individualist and a collectivist; an incomparable democrat and an apologist of modern totalitarianism. Rousseau wrote lucidly and prolifically. His writings can be classified in two periods.
- ❖ The first period saw Discourse on the Sciences and Arts, and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, wherein Rousseau attacks the morally decadent ancien regime but lends only a qualified support to modernity, lamenting

E ▶ ENTRI

the unnaturalness of reason, the eclipse of sentiments and the corruption of huais brought about by advair?cement~ltd in arts and sciences; and appears as a romantic rebel, castigating civil society for its injustices. In the second phase, that saw the Social Contract, Rousseau is more sober, in tune witll the age of reason, no longer tearing down society but building it up, the rationalist way.

- ❖ There thus seems to be a logical discrepancy between the two periods. This is understandable as the moods are different, but there is no contradiction as his purpose is clearly to provide a philosophical justification for de~nocratic governance. The first phase is a prelude to the second that saw the tl~theory of General Will. To understand his purpose and tl~eory we need to begin with Rousseau, the tnan, and his times.

CRITIQUE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

- The themes introduced in his prize winning essay were developed further in his second essay written in 1754 on "what is the origin of inequality among lliell, and is it as~theorized by natural
- law?" The second Discourse, as this essay is called, is a narrative of the fall of man-how his
- nature got twisted, warped and corrupted with the emergence of civil society, which in turn was necessitated by the rise of the institution of private property and the need to defend it by
- institutionalizing social inequality through 'law'. Here, Rousseau is extolling the 'natural man' l and pouring scorn over the so-called 'civilized men'. The problem evidently was not with ll men,but the nature of society in which he was living.
- Tracing the fall, Rousseau says that in the state of nature, which is a condition prior to the emergence of society, man was a 'noble savage'; lived in isolation and had a few elementary, easily appeased needs. It was neither

E ▶ ENTRI

a condition of plenty nor scarcity; neither there was conflict nor cooperative living.

- There was no language or knowledge of any science or art. In such a situation man was neither happy nor unhappy, had no conception of just and unjust, virtue and vice. The noble savage was guided not by reason but by two instincts—self love or the instinct of self-preservation, and sympathy or the gregarious instinct.
- The state of nature, which was one of innocence, did not last forever. In course of time, the noble savages who lived in isolation discovered the utility and usefulness of labor.
- Without yet having given up their primitive dispersal, men began to collaborate occasionally and created a degree of provisional order. Later men began to build shelters for themselves and families stayed together at a stage Rousseau calls the patriarchal stage. But as men consolidated his first social relations, he gave himself to labor and to thought, i.e, to the use of reason and language. -%
- This brought in the first fall for man, wrenching him from the happiness of the 'patriarchal stage' even as the discovery of division of labor, enabled men to pass from a subsistence
- economy to an economy of productive development. The emergence of technology and agriculture was indeed a great revolution, But iron and corn, which civilized men, ruined humanity.
- The cultivation of earth led to the enclosure of land, and this necessarily gave rise to the idea
- As Rousseau puts it in a famous statement: "The first man who after falling off a piece of land, took it upon himself to say "This belongs to me" and found people simple minded enough to believe, was the true founder of the civil society".
- Once men began to claim possessions, the inequality of men's talents and skills led to an inequality of fortunes. Wealth enabled some men to enslave

E ▶ ENTRI

others; the very idea of possession excited men's passions, and provoked competition and conflict.

- Conflict led to a demand for a system of law for sake of order and tranquility. The rich especially voiced this demand, for while the state of violence threatened everyone's life it was
- 'worse for the rich because it threatened their possessions also. Hence the expedient of a **'social contract'** was thought of by a rich than to the detriment of the poor.
- The result, says Rousseau, was the origin of civil society and laws, which gave new fetters the poor, and new powers to the rich; which destroyed natural liberty forever, fixed for all the
- law of property and inequality, transformed shrewd usurpation into settled right, and to benefit
- a few ambitious persons, subjected the whole of human race thenceforth to labor, servitude and wretchedness.
- Rousseau suggests however, that things need not have turned out as badly as they had. If, with
- the establishment of the government, men, 'ran headlong into claims', that was because men had the sense to see the advantages of political institutions, but not the experience to foresee the dangers.
- To this theme Rousseau was to return some years later in the Social Contract. It may however be noted here that Rousseau was not depicting the transition from state of nature to 'civil society' as a historical fact.
- Rather the above account has to be understood as hypothetical reasoning calculated to explain the nature of things, than to ascertain their actual origin.

THEORY 'OF GENERAL WILL

- ❖ By making the General Will sovereign and individuals as participants in the General Will, Rousseau reconciled authority with freedom as none before him laid down. In order to understand how Rousseau achieved this end, we need to appreciate the nature of the General Will.
- ❖ In the Discourse on Political Economy, where he had first stated the concept of General Will,
- ❖ Rousseau says that General Will tends always to the preservation and welfare of the whole and of every part, and is the source of the laws, constitutes for all the members of the state, in relation to one another and to it, the rule of what is just and unjust." It aims always at the public good and is different from the will of all, for while the former aims at the common interest,
- ❖ The latter aims only at private interests and is a sum of particular wills.
- ❖ The generality of the will is not a matter of numbers as of intrinsic quality and goodness, it is not an empirical fact so much as a moral fact. It is an outcome of the moral attitude in the hearts of citizens to act justly.
- ❖ It is produced whenever all individual members of a group, sacrificing their private interests, unite in aiming at some object believed to be good
- ❖ for the whole group. The general will comes from all and applies to all and embodies the free rational will of all.
- ❖ Rousseau however recognises that unanimity amongst citizens in general will may not be possible at times, because while people may be willing the good;
- ❖ they might not always be understanding or knowing it correctly, This happens, particularly when factions make it difficult for independent citizens to pursue the common good. In such a situation Rousseau suggests that
- ❖ if we "...take away from the wills the various particular interests which conflict with one another, what remains as the sum of the differences is the general will." But there is one important condition here—the result will be general will,

ENTRI

only if and so far as, all the individuals of a group are moved (even in the pursuit of their private interest) by the thought of themselves

- ❖ as members of a group, all of whose members have interests deserving respect and consideration, Such being the nature of general will, there is no problem in obeying the general will but if
- ❖ someone refuses to obey it, Rousseau says that he will be compelled to do so: "This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free", otherwise the social contract will become an empty formula. Moreover, such compulsion is justified because the individual has given his
- ❖ prior consent for being restrained by the state, knowing well that socially cohesive conduct in the long run best prohibits its own interests, and knowing also that he will occasionally find
- ❖ the attractions of some more immediate selfish good too strong to resist and therefore he should be restrained whenever he yields to such temptation.
- ❖ In other words, when a man is being compelled to obey the general will, by the whole body
- ❖ of citizens, it only means that he is being asked to follow his own best interest, which he at a particular instance is unfortunately unaware of. Obeying the General Will is then an expression of the moral freedom of the individuals.
- ❖ This, when the general will rules over the people, the latter should have no grumble about the corrosion of their liberty. Because obedience to the sovereign is no longer an obedience to any external authority or arbitrary rule by one or few;
- ❖ it is actually an obedience to the rational part of their own selves or to a self-government—a government that would do what one's rational self would, indeed, want to do.
- ❖ Although he finally classifies him as an enlightenment thinker, because in many ways he did advocate Enlightenment ideas, Rousseau is also highly critical of the enlightenment and modernity in general. Rousseau thinks that

E ▶ ENTRI

civilization corrupts human beings. He equated civilization with vanity and arrogance.

- ❖ Rousseau believed that what was wrong with the modern man was that he had lost touch with his feelings.
- ❖ Rousseau's regard for rationality is mixed with an equal or greater regard for feeling. Critiquing the civil society of his contemporary times he pointed out that the social order was founded for the protection of private interest and property; that private property was at the root of social inequality, injustices and exploitation and that such a civil order was contrary to man's . nature.
- ❖ Since society was inevitable; man couldn't unlearn himself to return to the woods; and the realization of man's nature depended on the nature of socialization, the task for him was to suggest the just principles upon which to found a social-political order that would be conducive to the realization of human freedom. Rousseau accomplishes this task in his Social Contract, wherein Rousseau lays down the blueprint of the required political society. This ideal political-
- ❖ Society is set up through a social contract, in the image of a state of nature, possessing a general will, which is sovereign and which while always aiming at the general good, comes from all and applies to all equally.
- ❖ In Rousseau's theory of General Will, **freedom and authority** automatically gets reconciled, as there is no tension between the two. The earlier theories, which were premised on individual separatism, and the need to preserve and protect private interests through setting up an authority, failed to properly reconcile authority with freedom because it had a faulty theory of man and society

Module II

Utilitarians

Jeremy Bentham : Principle of Utility



Jeremy Bentham was an English philosopher and political radical. He is primarily known today for his moral philosophy, especially his principle of utilitarianism, which evaluates actions based upon their consequences.

The relevant consequences, in particular, are the overall happiness created for everyone affected by the action. Influenced by many enlightenment thinkers, especially empiricists such as John Locke and David Hume, Bentham developed an ethical theory grounded in a largely empiricist account of human nature.

He famously held a hedonistic account of both motivation and value according to which what is fundamentally valuable and what ultimately motivates us is pleasure and pain. Happiness, according to Bentham, is thus a matter of experiencing pleasure and lack of pain.

Although he never practiced law, Bentham did write a great deal of philosophy of law, spending most of his life critiquing the existing law and strongly advocating legal reform.

Throughout his work, he critiques various natural accounts of law which claim, for example, that liberty, rights, and so on exist independent of government. In this way, Bentham arguably developed an early form of what is now often called **“legal positivism.”** Beyond such critiques,

He ultimately maintained that putting his moral theory into consistent practice would yield results in legal theory by providing justification for social, political, and legal institutions.

Principle of Utility

1. Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while.

The principle of utility recognizes this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and of law. Systems which attempt to question it, deal in sounds instead of sense, in caprice instead of reason, in darkness instead of light.

But enough of metaphor and declamation: it is not by such means that moral science is to be improved.

II. The principle of utility is the foundation of the present work: it will be proper therefore at the outset to give an explicit and determinate account of what is meant by it. By principle 2 of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever. according to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever, and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government.

III. By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness, (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community: if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual.

IV. The interest of the community is one of the most general expressions that can occur in the phraseology of morals: no wonder that the meaning of it is often lost. When it has a meaning, it is this. The community is a fictitious body, composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting as its members. The interest of the community then is, what is it?— the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it.

V. It is in vain to talk of the interest of the community, without understanding what is the interest of the individual.[3] A thing is said to promote the interest, or to be for the interest, of an individual, when it tends to add to the sum total of his pleasures: or, what comes to the same thing, to diminish the sum total of his pains.

VI. An action then may be said to be conformable to the principle of utility, or, for shortness sake, to utility, (meaning with respect to the community at large) when the tendency it has to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any it has to diminish it.

VII.' A measure of government (which is but a particular kind of action, performed by a particular person or persons) may be said to be conformable to or dictated by the principle of utility, when in like manner the tendency which it has to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any which it has to diminish it.

VIII. When an action, or in particular a measure of government, is supposed by a man to be conformable to the principle of utility, it may be convenient, for the purposes of discourse, to imagine a kind of law or dictate, called a law or dictate of utility: and to speak of the action in question, as being conformable to such law or dictate.

IX. A man may be said to be a partisan of the principle of utility, when the approbation or disapprobation he annexes to any action, or to any measure, is determined by and proportioned to the tendency which he conceives it to have to augment or to diminish the happiness of the community: or in other words, to its conformity or nonconformity to the laws or dictates of utility.

X. Of an action that is conformable to the principle of utility one may always say either that it is one that ought to be done, or at least that it is not one that ought not to be done. One may also say that it is right, it should be done; at least that it is not wrong, it should be done: that it is a right action; at least that it is not a wrong action. When thus interpreted, the words ought, and right and wrong and others of that stamp, have a meaning: when otherwise, they have none.

XI. Has the rectitude of this principle been ever formally contested? It should seem that it had, by those who have not known what they have been meaning. Is it susceptible to any direct proof? it should seem not: for that which is used to prove everything else, cannot itself be proved: a chain of proofs must have their commencement somewhere. To give such proof is as impossible as it is needless.

XII. Not that there is or ever has been that human creature at breathing, however stupid or perverse, who has not on many, perhaps on most occasions of his life, deferred to it. By the natural constitution of the human frame, on most occasions of their lives men in general embrace this principle, without thinking of it: if not for the ordering of their own actions, yet for the trying of their own actions, as well as of those of other men.

There have been, at the same time, not many perhaps, even the most intelligent, who have been disposed to embrace it purely and without reservation. There are even few who have not taken some occasion or other to quarrel with it, either on account of their not always understanding how to apply it, or on account of some prejudice or other which they were afraid to examine into, or could not bear to part with. For such is the stuff that man is made of: in principle and in practice, in a right track and in a wrong one, the rarest of all human qualities is consistency.

XIII. When a man attempts to combat the principle of utility, it is with reasons drawn, without his being aware of it, from that very principle itself.[4] His arguments, if they prove anything, prove not that the principle is wrong, but that, according to the applications he supposes to be made of it, it is misapplied. Is it possible for a man to move the earth? Yes; but he must first find another earth to stand upon.

XIV. To disprove the propriety of it by arguments is impossible; but, from the causes that have been mentioned, or from some confused or partial view of it, a

man may happen to be disposed not to relish it. Where this is the case, if he thinks the settling of his opinions on such a subject is worth the trouble, let him take the following steps, and at length, perhaps, he may come to reconcile himself to it.

J.S.Mill : Ideas on Liberty and Representative Government



John Stuart Mill is one of the most important defenders of the ideal of individual freedom of speech and expression, yet he combines this with an ethical view that identifies the right action, policy or law as that which maximizes the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In this chapter we will explore the coherence of Mill's philosophy, and we will also examine the way in which he sees the main threat to liberty or freedom to have changed from the state to society with his fear of the tyranny of the majority.

- **explain Mill's psychological hedonism**
- **explain the connection between utilitarianism and liberty**
- **describe how Mill attempts to overcome the threat of majority tyranny**
- **assess Mill's defense of free speech and individuality.**

- **John Stuart Mill** (1806–1873) was born in London, the son of James Mill

ENTRRI

a radical politician, administrator and historian of British India. For a time the Mills rented a house in the grounds of the London home of Jeremy Bentham the great radical philosopher and founder of utilitarianism.

- The young Mill was educated by his father separately from the influence of other children, beginning classical Greek at three years of age, followed by Latin then history and political economy.
- In his teens he became involved in radical politics and in his late teens he entered the employment of the East India Company in a position equivalent to a senior civil servant.
- Mill had a famous emotional crisis, brought on by the recognition that a life devoted to the greatest happiness of the greatest number left him personally cold and empty. He recovered a sense of personal worth through romantic poetry and the companionship of Harriet Taylor.
- Mill and Taylor began a relationship that lasted for the rest of Harriet's life, despite the fact that she remained married to another man. Although the relationship was 'chaste' and appears to have been the marriage of 'two minds' it nevertheless challenged most of the conventions of Victorian morality.
- Mill was the author of numerous large and important books on logic, political economy and philosophy, yet his reputation is largely based on a series of short essay-length works written towards the end of his life of which the two most famous are *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty*.
- Utilitarianism offers an alternative basis to natural law for our moral and political obligations. It asserts that actions, policies and laws are right and obligatory in so far as they maximize the greatest happiness of the greatest number.
- Mill understands happiness to be the psychological sensation of pleasure and the absence of pain, so he is often described as a psychological hedonist.
- Utilitarianism seems to suggest that if a restriction on liberty (such as free speech) makes people happier then it is justified.

ENTRI

- Yet Mill is also a defender of unrestricted personal liberty. His essay *On Liberty* is one of the most important modern defenses of freedom of speech, expression or lifestyle even when this causes offense to others.
- Mill's arguments are still deployed in contemporary debates about multiculturalism and whether the state should legislate on moral or religious matters.

Pleasure and pain

Mill's intellectual 'godfather,' Jeremy Bentham, argued that nature placed mankind under the 'governance of two sovereign masters; pain and pleasure'. With this claim he attempted to explain all human motivation and also explain the basis of value claims. In this way Bentham established the basic psychology of utilitarianism, namely psychological hedonism. Despite an equivocal relationship with '**Benthamism**' following his mental crisis, by the time John Stuart Mill came to write *Utilitarianism* he fully endorsed this basic position.

However, Mill was also aware of the consequences of adopting this theory. Whereas Bentham was prepared to concede that 'pushpin [a kind of pub game] was as good as poetry' as long as they both produce the same quantity of pleasure, Mill was afraid that left no room for culture or art and effort. If values are merely sensations of pleasure then We are no better than pigs.

Put simply, if we imagine a balance, with any of the greatest cultural achievements on one side, then as long as we have enough pig-like comforts, these must outweigh the pleasures of intellectual discovery, artistic creativity or moral heroism. And if humans were given enough swinish pleasures – food, warmth, sex and sleep this would outweigh whatever good they might forgo in terms of their liberty, creativity and individuality. Mill rejects this 'Benthamite' view whilst accepting the basic terms of psychological hedonism by introducing a dual-standard theory of value with his distinction between higher and lower pleasures.

The principle of utility

- ❖ John Stuart Mill is one of the most important theorists of utilitarianism, Yet utilitarianism is a contested doctrine even among utilitarian's. At its simplest it is 'The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they produce the reverse of happiness All actions, policies and laws should be judged in terms of how much utility or happiness they generate and when we are faced with a choice we should choose the one that creates the most happiness.
- ❖ It is because utilitarianism is a maximizing theory that introducing qualitative distinctions among pleasures is so controversial, because if there is no common unit of value produced by different acts, policies or laws, Then how can we choose between them?
- ❖ Political choices would be like choosing between apples and oranges. Notice that Mill's utilitarianism is both a criterion of rightness and a decision rule or criterion of obligation – it tells us which actions, laws and policies are the best and which we should pursue.
- ❖ But what precisely is Mill arguing here? Commentators have identified a number of different positions that can be attributed to Mill. First, there is act-utilitarianism. This assumes the most literal interpretation of Mill's argument that in each case of acting each person is under an obligation only to do that which creates the most happiness.
- ❖ But if act-utilitarianism is true then we could have no general obligation to obey the law, because there would always be a question whether obeying

the law in a particular case would maximize pleasure. Nor would we have an obligation to keep promises or repay debts.

- ❖ This has led Some commentators to claim Mill is a rule-utilitarian. Rule-utilitarians argue that we only have an obligation to act in accordance with the rule that maximizes utility when most people follow it; this explains why we have rules about keeping promises and telling the truth. But this interpretation has been criticized because it is unstable, as we could always find a rule where general compliance plus exceptions would be even more beneficial and then we seem to collapse back into act-utilitarianism.
- ❖ This has led some recent commentators to argue that Mill is not a direct utilitarian at all. This means that the principle of utility is not a direct source of obligations. It is argued instead that Mill is more properly seen as an indirect utilitarian – that is someone who thinks utility is best maximized as an indirect result of following rules and laws.
- ❖ This interpretation seems to be born out by Mill's argument of Utilitarianism, where he introduces the punishable criterion of rightness or duty. This claims that 'We do not call anything wrong, unless we mean to imply that a person ought to be punished in some way or other for doing it; if not by law, by the opinion of his fellow creatures; if not by opinion, by the reproaches of his own conscience.'
- ❖ Mill's point here seems to be that there are some acts which are not only not maximally beneficial, but so important that we consider their non-performance harms, injustices or even crimes and impose punishments.
- ❖ This still leaves open the question of how we identify the harms, injustices and crimes that we think need punishment and whether these may change over time, just as we no longer think of witchcraft as a crime deserving

punishment. If we introduce simple utility calculations to identify those things that fall under the punishability criterion are we not back where we started with act-utilitarianism?

- ❖ Mill does not give us a simple answer to the question of how we should interpret his utilitarianism, but that he considers some wrongs more serious and deserving of social sanction is clear from his defense of liberty, to which we shall now turn.

The tyranny of the majority

- Mill's *On Liberty* provides one of the most important defenses of individual freedom of thought and expression.
- Yet it departs from the defenses of individual freedom provided by earlier thinkers such as Locke.
- Locke defends individuals' rights against the absolute monarch – we can contrast his position with Hobbes' defense of absolutism against freedom, although Locke is not responding directly to Hobbes.
- Mill however, takes a different route. For Mill, the main threat to individual freedom no longer comes from the arbitrary and absolute ruler, indeed Mill suggests that this is now merely an historical matter that was satisfactorily dealt with by the likes of Locke.
- Instead the threat to liberty is posed by society itself and by what Mill calls the tyranny of the majority.
- This is especially important in modern societies that have representative and democratic governments. Mill was writing at a time when the vote was being slowly extended.
- Mill was undoubtedly a democrat and believed in the universal suffrage (including for women) but he also saw possible dangers in the rise of democracy especially where this reflects the creation of a homogenous mass society.
- The main threat of mass society is the pressure of opinion

ENTRI

and the imperative of conformity. Mill saw the potential for representative

- democracy to pose a threat to individuality by its encouragement of oppressive moral conformism.
- In Mill's own day the virtues of sobriety, thrift and industry, all essential for the progress of a thriving commercial society, were being enforced through social pressure and anyone who departed from these conventions was likely to face condemnation.

The problem Mill faced with respect to the tyranny of the majority is twofold.

1. First, his utilitarian theory suggests that whatever makes the majority Happiest is right, and this seems to support the democratic majority oppressing the views and lifestyles of eccentrics, artists and anyone else who is different. So Mill has to show how a defense of freedom against conformism is compatible with his utilitarian philosophy.
 2. Secondly, Mill is afraid that conformism will result in social stagnation and this will make mankind worse off in the long run, as life becomes colorless and empty and devoid of diversity, invention and creativity.
- The task of *On Liberty* is to show why modern states, especially democracies, should restrict the scope of their actions to defending individuals from harm and otherwise leaving them alone to pursue their own lives.
 - The state should not treat its citizens as children or try to make them morally good (it should not be paternalistic) and it should refrain from paternalistic legislation even when the majority wants it.

The harm principle

ENTRI

- In *On Liberty* Mill argues that '...the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection, or as he puts it later '...to prevent harm to others'.
- This idea is supposed to be simple but raises many questions. The liberty principle is supposed to identify a sphere of self-regarding actions over which the individual is sovereign, and the only limits on this sphere are that one does not harm others.
- For example, if I want to use narcotic drugs, like heroin, that is my concern, unless I have to steal property or cause violence to others in order to obtain the drug. Another example is that I can drink myself into a stupor unless I am a train driver or a soldier on duty.
- The context of whether an action is the concern of others and therefore a matter of public regulation depends on whether it is harmful to others. That an individual might be harming himself is not the state's concern. It is not part of the government's role to make men moral or even healthy if they should choose to engage in dangerous activities that are dangerous to themselves alone.

Individuality

- ❖ Mill makes a similar case in his defense of the ideal of individuality. Again he asserts the necessity of experiments in living (the accommodation of unconventional lifestyles and relationships) as a means to personal growth and self-culture and as a means of discovering the nature of the good life.
- ❖ Even though Mill had defended the idea of higher pleasures and moral experts in Utilitarianism, he is particularly sensitive to the claims for moral

ENTRI

expertise. Moral expertise depends upon the challenge of experiencing alternative lifestyles and relationships. No one can claim that they have the definitive account of the good life for mankind and impose it on Others.

- ❖ This is because from a personal perspective the good life cannot be imposed from the outside, but must be endorsed from the inside: Mill asserts the autonomy of the individual in the face of claims of authority. But furthermore, Mill is concerned that the substance of the good life is not fixed and static for all time.
- ❖ It is important to note that Mill's argument depends on the validity of his critique of absolute truth claims and authority in his discussion of freedom of speech and thought. The tyranny of mass society has the effect of turning the conventional practices of society into received and unquestioned truths that must be imposed on all, but these could be wrong, and history has shown that these were often wrong.
- ❖ Mill gives the examples of Jesus Christ and Socrates who were both executed for challenging the conventional beliefs of their own times, yet who have gone on to be the two most important moral teachers of the west.
- ❖ Mill is happy to appeal to Jesus as a moral teacher even though he rejects the Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus. Consequently, we cannot be certain that we have acquired the truth in morality and ethics any more than we can in the natural sciences, and that in persecuting those who are different we might be silencing the moral teachers and exemplars of the future.

Module III IDEALISTS

G.F.Hegel : Dialectics and State



Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) is one of the greatest systematic thinkers in the history of Western philosophy. In addition to epitomizing German idealist philosophy, Hegel boldly claimed that his own system of philosophy represented an historical culmination of all previous philosophical thought. Hegel's overall encyclopedic system is divided into the science of Logic, the philosophy of Nature, and the philosophy of Spirit. Of most enduring interest are his views on history, society, and the state, which fall within the realm of Objective Spirit. Some have considered Hegel to be a nationalistic apologist for the Prussian State of the early 19th century, but his significance has been much broader, and there is no doubt that Hegel himself considered his work to be an expression of the self-consciousness of the World Spirit of his time.

At the core of Hegel's social and political thought are the concepts of freedom, reason, self-consciousness, and recognition. There are important connections between the metaphysical or speculative articulation of these ideas and their application to social and political reality, and one could say that the full meaning of these ideas can be grasped only with a comprehension of their social and historical embodiment. The work that

explicates this concertizing of ideas, and which has perhaps stimulated as much controversy as interest, is the Philosophy of Right (Philosophie des Rechts), which will be a main focus of this essay.

IDEALISM

- In the history of political ideas there are two major schools of thought about the nature of reality—idealism and naturally, rationalism and empiricism. The question about that nature of reality is ontological; while the question about knowing it is epistemological according to the
- Idealist school, of which Hegel is a major proponent, (the other one being Plato), true knowledge of everything in the world—material and non material—is deduced from the idea of the thing.
- In other words, the idea of the thing is more important than the thing itself. Therefore, what is real and permanent is the "idea of a thing" not the thing as much. This is so because the physical world is constantly in a state of flux and change but the idea is permanent.
- The physical world is only a manifestation of the tile idea. For example, the true knowledge of a table or chair lies in comprehending the idea of a table or chair. An actually existing table is a table insofar as it has the characteristics of table-hood. A carpenter is able to make a table because
- He has the idea of a table in his mind and the tile table that he makes is only a manifestation or approximation—~of that idea. The terms hot and cold are understood as ideas.
- The knowledge of actually existing things are relative and hence imperfect. When you say that water in this glass is hot it is only a relative truth because as compared to boiling water it is cold but as compared to water in the refrigerator it is hot. So the real knowledge is to comprehend the idea of hot and cold.

E ▶ ENTRI

- **Hegelian idealism** is often referred to as Absolute Idealism because it provides us with a set of categories (hot and cold, pleasure and pain) in terms of which human experiences of the past and the present can be understood. There is another dimension of Hegelian idealism.
- This may be called Idealist Interpretation of History. According to this theory it is the ideas that constitute the true motor of history. What gives momentum to history is the development of ideas.
- All changes in society, economy, polity and culture take place because of development of ideas.
- Hegel's Idealism which is often called Absolute Idealism sees a certain relationship between the subject and the object. It is a relationship between the subject and the object.
- It is a relationship between a knowing subject and the objective world, which is known, i.e. relationship between the mind and the world.

Dialectical Method

- Hegel's political philosophies rest mainly on his dialectical method. As already pointed out Hegel borrowed his method from Socrates who is the first exponent of this method.
- Hegel has himself expressed his debt to Socrates for this method. The dialectic means to discuss.
- Socrates believed that one can arrive at the truth only by constant questioning. It was the process of exposing contradictions through the method of discussion. Having taken a clue from Socrates
- Hegel argued that absolute Idea or the Spirit, in search of self-realization moves from Being to non-being to becoming. To put it in simple words, an idea moves from a thesis to antithesis
- until a synthesis of the two is found. Synthesis has elements of thesis as well as antithesis.

E ▶ ENTRI

- In due course the synthesis itself acquires the status of a thesis and gives rise to its own antithesis. This process goes on. In practice, Hegel applied his dialectical method to the domain of ideas.
- Therefore, his method may be described as dialectical idealism. It means that every idea (thesis) gives rise to a counter idea (antithesis) and the original idea and counter idea (merge) give rise to a new idea (synthesis).
- This new idea, in due course, itself becomes a thesis and gives rise to its antithesis and the process goes on. Hegel argued that through the use of his dialectical method he has discovered the greatest formula in the history of philosophy.
- He maintained that the march of reason in history was a complex dialectical process.
- It is a mechanism by which thought propels itself. Dialectical idealism was a logical apparatus for interpreting history in its true perspective.

Use of Dialectical Method

Having stated his dialectical method Hegel argued that a phenomenon can be best understood according to the law of dialectics, i.e, when contrasted with its opposite.

Pleasure is best understood in opposition to pain, heat in opposition to cold, goodness in opposition to badness, justice in opposition to injustice and so on. Hegel has given several instances of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The following instances given by him are noteworthy and you should remember them.

i) Family is the thesis, civil society is its antithesis and state is the synthesis.

ii) Similarly, despotism is the thesis, democracy is its antithesis and constitutional monarchy is the synthesis.

iii) Inorganic world is the thesis, organic world is its antithesis and human beings are the synthesis.

Hegel believed that the true nature of things can be known only if its contradictions are also known. In this sense, his theory of dialects is rooted in contradiction or negation. He considered contradictions as the driving force of the whole process of evolution. This is the fundamental law of the COSMOS as also of thought.

THEORY OF STATE

The most seminal contribution of Hegel to Political Philosophy is his theory of state. Like Plato Hegel is a great system builder. His theory of state is rooted in the axiom:

"What is rational is real and what is real is rational". It means that whatever exists in the world is according to Reason and whatever is according to reason exists. Hegel's theory of state is based on the basic premise about the gradual unfolding of Reason or Spirit or Absolute Idea through a dialectical process. Reason gets its perfect realization in the state.

- ★ Thus, the state is Reason personified. State is rational, state is real; therefore what is rational is real. Here, real does not only mean that which is empirical but that which is fundamental.
- ★ In fact, Hegel distinguishes between real and that which merely exists. That which merely exists is only a momentary and mere surface manifestation of underlying forces which alone are real.
- ★ Thus, Hegel sought to bridge the gap between the rational and the real. The real is nothing but the objective manifestation of spirit.

- ★ This implies that for Hegel all states are rational in so far as they represent the various states of unfolding of Reason. By doing so he took a conservative position because it tantamount to saying that whatever happens is a manifestation of the unfolding of Reason. No event ever occurs unless ordained by Reason.
- ★ So every event takes place according to a rational plan. He considered the state as "**March of God on Earth**" or the ultimate embodiment of Reason.
- ★ State, for Hegel, is the earliest manifestation of Reason because it emerges as a synthesis of family (thesis) and civil society (antithesis). Family fulfills man's biological needs—food, sex and love. It is the first manifestation of spirit but it cannot fulfill the higher or more complex needs for which we need a civil society.
- ★ While the basic feature of family is unity based on love, civil society is necessary for the fulfillment of competitive self-interest and for the satisfaction of diverse human needs, particularly the economic needs which the family cannot fulfill.
- ★ The civil society is organized on the basis of an individual's material needs, which are not wholly private and yet are primarily self-regarding. It is less selfish than the family. It is saved from disintegration because men begin to realize that their needs can be met only by recognising the claims of others.

- ★ Civil society educates the individual where he begins to see that he can get what he needs only by willing what other individuals need. It is not a complete organic unity.
- ★ Such unity is realized only when the tension involved in the contradiction between family and civil society is transcended in the final synthesis of the state.
- ★ The civil society looks after the material needs of Human beings and therefore, Hegel sees it as a state in its embryonic form.
- ★ The state looks after the universal interests of the whole community and it acquires an organic character.
- ★ By way of summing up this complex Hegelian theory of state we may say that first it was divine origin because the state is a divinely ordained growth of absolute Idea or Reason.
- ★ There can be no spiritual evolution beyond the state as there can be no physical evolution beyond man. It is the march of God on earth,
- ★ **Secondly**, Hegel is statist because the state in his philosophy is not a means to an end but an end in itself. The state does not exist for the individuals but the individuals exist for the state.
- ★ **Thirdly**, for Hegel the whole (state) is greater than the parts (individuals) that constitute it. Their (individuals') importance is only due to the fact that they are members of the state. Thus, Hegel makes the individuals totally subordinate to the state.
- ★ Only the state knows what is in an individual's interest. State in that sense is infallible. It is also infallible because it is divine. Hegel argued

that,, "all the worth which tile human beings I possess-all spiritual reality-he possesses only through the State.

- ★ For his spiritual reality consists in this, that its own essence-Reason-is objectively present to him, that it possesses objective immediate existence for him. The State is the **Divine Idea as it exists on earth**".

T.H.Green : State and Freedom



T.H. Green, in full Thomas Hill Green, (born April 7, 1836, Birkin, Yorkshire, England—died March 26, 1882, Oxford, Oxford shire), English educator, political theorist, and Idealist philosopher of the so-called Neo-Kantian school. Through his teaching, Green exerted great influence on philosophy in late 19th-century England. Most of his life centered at Oxford, where he was educated, elected a fellow in 1860, served as a lecturer, and in 1878 was appointed professor of moral philosophy. His lectures provided the basis for his most significant works, Prolegomena to Ethics (1883) and Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation, published in the collected Works, 3 vol. (1885–88).

THEORY OF LIBERTY

The term liberty means Mukti which means freedom, "Liberty and Freedom" is a very important principle of political ideas. Liberty is sometimes regarded as the different principle of political ideas. Liberty is sometimes regarded as the different

principle of liberalism, but freedom Liberty is the ability of individuals to have control over their own action.

There are two types of liberty: Negative and Positive. The first type of freedoms, such as freedom of speech and freedom of devotion, represent the negative aspect of liberty; they imply a negative role of the state, that is not to control the individual in pursuing his self-appointed goals. The second type of freedom, such as freedom from fear and freedom from want, show the positive aspect of liberty. It is also essential to remember that these two types of freedom, namely negative liberty, and positive liberty, are not opposed to each.

In fact, they are the opposite: they are two sides of the same coin. Liberty is the ability of the individuals to have control over their own right and actions. There are different understandings of liberty, which shows the relationship of individuals to society in different ways, including some which relate to life under a **“social contract”** or to exist in a “state of nature”, and some which see active exercise of freedom and rights as essential to liberty. Understanding liberty involves how we see the roles and responsibilities of the individual in society in relation to understanding the concept of free will.

He is one of the thinkers of positive liberalism; his theory was inspired by idealist theory, developed from the teachings of Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel.

Green recognizes ‘moral freedom’ as the different quality of man. He based his principles on the religious nature of man, he maintained that man strength of mind act upon his reflections is **an “act of will”** and is on the outside determined by God, According to Green, freedom is not the Supposed ability to do anything desired but is the power to identify oneself with the good that reason reveals as one’s own true good.

Green said that man's will must always be free in at least one sense: " since in all willing a man is his own object to himself, the object by which the action is determined, the will is always free, that which is willing constitutes freedom, self-satisfaction is always free and is always the object of the will.

T.H GREEN POSITIVE FREEDOM

T.H GREEN'S Theory of liberty is characterized by moral freedom. He proceeds his studies by distinguishing between negative and positive freedom. As we know that Negative liberty is freedom from interference from other people. It is primarily concerned with the possession of the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. Whereas positive liberty is having the power and resources to fulfill one's own potential as opposed to negative liberty, which is freedom from external restraint. Example like free from restriction, lock up.

- **Positive liberty** consists in acting according to reason, achieving self-realization or self-perfection. T.H Green said that the true liberty or positive freedom of man consists in the act of "Good Will", it is a positive power of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying.
- GREEN set out a number of different descriptions of the positive concept of freedom. In fact, there are three descriptions of positive freedom to be found in Green's thoughts. While all three descriptions are of course closely linked, each shows a different picture and brings out a different aspect of the concept.
- On one occasion 'the idea of true freedom was described as 'the maximum of power for all members of human society alike to make the best of themselves. In this description, Green puts special importance on the self-realization of the individual. A second description, describes freedom in the positive sense as 'the liberation of the powers of all men equally for contributions to a common good.

- This seems primary to point to an equal opportunity for all individual citizens. For the purpose of our present inquiry, however, we will chiefly base ourselves on what could be viewed as the classical definition of positive freedom. This concept is contrasted to the then current notion, which, in order to distinguish it from Green's redefinition of the term, is referred to as **'negative' freedom**.
- He also explains the negative freedom as following from its nature as a political ideal. This is set out by specifying three elements in which the difference with negative freedom consists. Again, these three elements are presented as building on one another.
- He started with a series of three negative characteristics, which are subsequently contrasted to the more appropriate conception of freedom by means of a parallel series of three determinations, culminating in a final point about the essentially social nature of freedom. The second distinguishing feature is the formal, unspecified nature of the condition of absence of compulsion: merely freedom to do as we like irrespective of what it is that we like' is contrasted with doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying.
- The third element centers on the compatibility of the exercise of various specific forms of freedom by different people: freedom that can be enjoyed by man or set of men or one set of men at the cost of a loss of freedom to others is opposed to those forms of freedom which do not interfere with the exercise of similar forms of freedom by others. These three elements prepare the way for the conclusion about social nature freedom. Genuine freedom can only be exercised ' through the help our security is given to him by his fellow men, and which he, in turn, helps to secure for them.

Freedom And Compulsion

His opinions on the relationship of freedom and compulsion clearly come out when he discusses the relationship of positive freedom and negative concept of freedom which so far had been current.

According to him, we shall see that freedom in all forms of doing what one will with one's own, is valuable only as a means to an end. That end is what we call freedom in the positive sense....

Green does not so much refer to the required character of the legal measures intended, as to the formal, unspecified nature of the negative concept of freedom. But it is obvious that there may be cases in which the project of the liberation of all men equally for contributions to the common good needs to be enforced by the law.

Green states in the same breath that though of course there can be no freedom among men who act not willingly but under compulsion, yet, on the other hand, the mere removal of compulsion, the mere enabling a man to do as he likes it in itself no contribution to true freedom.

THEORY OF RIGHTS

Under a system of rights, each individual recognizes in his fellow, and each claims from his fellow, that he shall recognize in him the power of pursuing ideal objects. Since each individual is a moral being, and in this respect all individuals are alike, it follows that the ideal objects of all are common objects. In other words, rights imply permission to pursue ideal objects; and since these are the common objects of all men, theoretically there is no question of a clash between the rights of different individuals.

- ❖ If the individual is to follow his conscience, then he must be free from external interference. He needs 'boundaries' to safeguard his freedom of thought, action, and so on. In Western societies these boundaries are rights, and of the most important parts of Green's political philosophy is his theory of rights. The sense of 'rights' with which Green is basically concerned on the Principles of political obligation can be understood that is to have a title to force others through a mere will to omit something that is otherwise indifferent to freedom".
- ❖ Moreover, he said that "**a right is a power** of which the exercise by the individual or somebody of men is recognized by a society either as itself directly essential to a common good or as conferred by authority of which the maintenance is recognized as so important."
- ❖ Green is primarily concerned with what I shall call for the moment "moral rights" that is those rights which are justified and recognized on moral values and not purely legal grounds. Moral rights exist prior to the law even though moral rights are conceptually different from legal rights, they should still find expression in law in order to make them effective regulators of human action. Therefore, the role of the state is to uphold the rights which originate in society as part of unfolding never ending awareness.
- ❖ Green attacks the view that there are moral rights which people possess merely as individuals: that is, rights which possess without reference to their existence as members of a society founded on a common purpose. In this sense, moral rights are necessarily social. The idea that men could possess ("natural") rights in a "**state of nature**" is silly for Green. Particular rights are only "natural" in the sense that they are "necessary to the end which it is the vocation of human society to realize". Hence, A law is not good because it enforces natural rights but because it contributes to the realization of a certain end.

- ❖ Since rights exist within a social system, Green argues that there can be no unrecognized rights. But recognition does not mean that all rights are legal rights only. Green draws a clear distinction between the state and society and holds that the recognizing authority in the matter of rights is not the state, but the moral consciousness of the community.
- ❖ The consciousness of the community signifies an eternal consciousness of the ideal self is but a part of that eternal consciousness, not of the mechanical order of nature. Therefore, man can pursue his moral end and attain self realization only in a social community, not in isolation. Thus, Green is concerned not with legal rights, but with ideal rights. These rights can be realized in society when society is properly organized on the basis of “good will”. As Barker has observed with regard to Green’s concept of rights:
- ❖ The rights of which Green speaks are relative to morality rather than law; and the recognition of which he speaks is recognition by a common moral consciousness rather than by a legislature. The rights are relative to morality, in the sense that they are the conditions of the attainment of the moral consciousness, because it knows that they are necessary conditions of its own satisfaction.

ROLE OF STATE

- ❖ The moral consciousness emanating from society – which impels men to pursue ideal objects is also responsible for the creation of the state. In other words, the state is a product of moral consciousness. According to Green, human consciousness postulates liberty; liberty involves rights; rights demand the state.

ENTRI

- ❖ The state is, therefore, an instrument of perfection as the idealist theory claims. The state owes its origin to the social nature of men, genuine human personality is essentially a social phenomena. It is inconceivable that an isolated natural man should be a moral agent. He exercises his moral freedom within the social organization, for which he needs rights. But rights are maintained by the state ; hence the state serves as an essential base for moral freedom.
- ❖ Green holds that the state should foster and protect the social, political and economic environments in which individuals will have the best chance of acting according to their consciences. Notice that in principle Green is not concerned to allow all actions, no matter what their origin. He himself was a temperance reform for example, and stated time and again that the state could legitimately curtail the individual's freedom to accept the slavery of alcoholism. Yet, the state must be careful when deciding which liberties to curtail and in which ways to curtail them.
- ❖ Over-enthusiastic or clumsy state intervention could easily close down opportunities for conscientious action thereby stifling the moral development of the individual. The state should intervene only where there was a clear, proven and strong tendency of a liberty to enslave the individual.
- ❖ Even when such a hazard had been identified, Green tended to favor action by the affected community itself rather than national state action itself – local councils and municipal authorities tended to produce measures that were more imaginative and better suited to the daily reality of a social problem. Hence he favored the 'local option' where local people decided on the issuing of liquor licenses in their area, through their town councils .

- ❖ Green stressed the need for specific solutions to be tailored to fit specific problems. This is not to say that all problems would be dealt with most effectively at the local or municipal levels. The national state was the only political institution powerful enough to wage war internationally for example.
- ❖ Moreover, it was the institution most likely to be able to resist vested interests such as those found in the manufacturing sector, meaning that it was the national government that should pass regulations on terms and conditions at work, say, or on the sale and control of land. Yet, Green stressed that there are no eternal solutions, no timeless division of responsibilities. The distribution of responsibilities should be guided by the imperative to enable as many individuals as possible to exercise their conscientious wills in particular contingent circumstances, as only in this way was it possible to foster individual self-realization in the long-run.
- ❖ Hence deciding on the distribution of responsibilities was more a matter for practical politics than for ethical or political philosophy. Experience may show that the local and municipal levels are unable to control the harmful influences of, say, the brewery industry. When it did show this, the national state should take responsibility for this area of public policy.

Green's theory of liberty talks about '**Moral Freedom**' as a unique quality of a man. This shows the two parts of the freedom one is Negative and second is Positive freedom, Negative freedom shows the satisfaction of the human desires, acting according to their own will and choice, Positive freedom consist of reaching or acting according to reason, achieving self-realization or self-perfection, therefore positive freedom means determination and the good will of an individual.

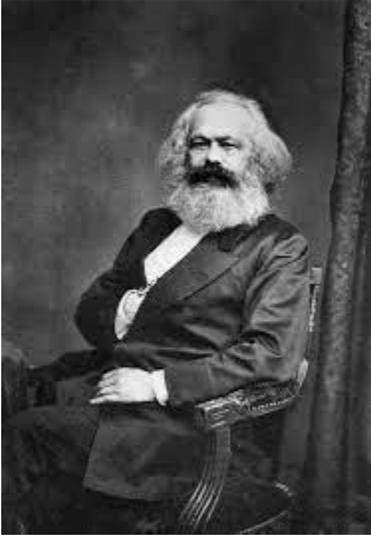
The theory also talks about the rights of an individual which are relative to ethics, morals and principles rather than law and the recognition of which speaks is recognition by a common moral values awareness rather than by a governing body or we can say elected representative. The rights are relative to the principals in the sense that they are the conditions of the attainment of the moral end; and the recognition is given by the moral awareness, because it knows that they are important conditions of its own satisfaction. According to Green's human perception postulates liberty; this involves rights; and which demands the state. Thus the state is an instrument of perfection.

As his theory is a protector of rights, he upholds the right to property as a means of realizing a will potentially directed to a social good. Green argues that the freedom of the individual postulates freedom to acquire and possess material goods according to one;s potentiality to contribute to the social good. The social good requires that different individuals should fill different positions in the social whole. Hence, the differences in property are functional from the point of view of social good, which should be recognized by the social perception.

Hence Green made a significant contribution to liberal political theory by discovering the moral foundations of social life and by subordinating the state to the will of society which alone embodies moral perceptions

Module IV Socialists

Karl Marx : Critical appraisal of Marxism



More than a century after his death, Karl Marx remains one of the most controversial figures in the Western world. His relentless criticism of capitalism and his corresponding promise of an inevitable, harmonious socialist future inspired a revolution of global proportions. It seemed that—with the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the spread of communism throughout Eastern Europe—the Marxist dream had firmly taken root during the first half of the twentieth century.

That dream collapsed before the century had ended. The people of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania, and the USSR rejected Marxist ideology and entered a remarkable transition toward private property rights and the market-exchange system, one that is still occurring. Which aspects of Marxism created such a powerful revolutionary force? And what explains its eventual demise? The answers lie in some general characteristics of Marxism—**its economics, social theory, and overall vision.**

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MARX

Dialectical Materialism

ENTRRI

- Dialectical materialism is the scientific methodology developed by Marx and Engels for the interpretation of history. Here, Marx has borrowed heavily from his
- predecessors, particularly, the German philosopher Hegel. Dialectics is a very old
- methodology, employed to discover truth by exposing contradictions, through a clash of opposite ideas. Hegel refined it by developing the trilogy of thesis, antithesis and
- synthesis. It is popularly known as the Dialectical Triad. Progress or growth takes place through the dialectical process. At every stage of growth, it is characterised by contradictions.
- These contradictions induce further changes, progress, and development. The thesis is challenged by its anti-thesis. Both contain elements of truth and falsehood.
- Truth is permanent, but falsehood is transitory. In the ensuing conflict of the thesis and the anti-thesis, the truth remains, but the false elements are destroyed.
- These false elements constitute contradictions. The true elements of both the thesis and the anti-thesis are fused together in a synthesis.
- This evolved synthesis during the course of time becomes a thesis and so, it is again challenged by its opposite antithesis, which again results in a synthesis. This process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis continues until the stage of perfection is reached.

Historical Materialism

Historical materialism is the application of dialectical materialism to the interpretation of history.

It is the economic interpretation of world history by applying the Marxian methodology of dialectical materialism. The world history has been divided into four stages:

- **primitive communism,**

- the slavery system,
- feudalism
- capitalism

Labor Theory of Value

The labor theory of value is a major pillar of traditional Marxian economics, which is evident in Marx's masterpiece, *Capital* (1867). The theory's basic claim is simple: the value of a commodity can be objectively measured by the average number of labor hours required to produce that commodity.

So the labor theory of value was not unique to Marxism. Marx did attempt, however, to turn the theory against the champions of capitalism, pushing the theory in a direction that most classical economists hesitated to follow.

Marx argued that the theory could explain the value of all commodities, including the commodity that workers sell to capitalists for a wage.

Marx called this commodity **"labor power."**

Labor power is the worker's capacity to produce goods and services. Marx, using principles of classical economics, explained that the value of labor power must depend on the number of labor hours it takes society, on average, to feed, clothe, and shelter a worker so that he or she has the capacity to work.

Marx then asked an apparently devastating question: if all goods and services in a capitalist society tend to be sold at prices (and wages) that reflect their true value (measured by labor hours), how can it be that capitalists enjoy profits—even if only in the short run? How do capitalists manage to squeeze out a residual between total revenue and total costs?

Capitalists, Marx answered, must enjoy a privileged and powerful position as owners of the means of production and are therefore able to ruthlessly exploit workers. Although the capitalist pays workers the correct wage, somehow—Marx was terribly vague here—the capitalist makes workers work more hours than are

needed to create the worker's labor power. If the capitalist pays each worker five dollars per day, he can require workers to work, say, twelve hours per day—a not uncommon workday during Marx's time. Hence, if one labor hour equals one dollar, workers produce twelve dollars' worth of products for the capitalist but are paid only five. The bottom line: capitalists extract "**surplus value**" from the workers and enjoy monetary profits.

Alienation

There is more to Marxism, however, than the labor theory of value and Marx's criticism of profit seeking. Marx wove economics and philosophy together to construct a grand theory of human history and social change. His concept of alienation, for example, first articulated in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, plays a key role in his criticism of capitalism.

Marx believed that people, by nature, are free, creative beings who have the potential to totally transform the world. But he observed that the modern, technologically developed world is apparently beyond our full control. Marx condemned the free market, for instance, as being "**anarchic**," or ungoverned. He maintained that the way the market economy is coordinated—through the spontaneous purchase and sale of private property dictated by the laws of supply and demand—blocks our ability to take control of our individual and collective destinies.

Marx's notion of alienation rests on a crucial but shaky assumption. It assumes that people can successfully abolish an advanced, market-based society and replace it with a democratic, comprehensively planned society. Marx claimed that we are alienated not only because many of us toil in tedious, perhaps even degrading, jobs, or because by competing in the marketplace we tend to place profitability above human need. The issue is not about toil versus happiness. We are alienated, he maintained, because we have not yet designed a society that is

fully planned and controlled, a society without competition, profits and losses, money, private property, and so on—a society that, Marx predicted, must inevitably appear as the world advances through history.

Here is the greatest problem with Marx's theory of alienation: even with the latest developments in computer technology, we cannot create a comprehensively planned system that puts an end to scarcity and uncertainty. But for Marxists to speak of alienation under capitalism, they must assume that a successfully planned world is possible. That is, Marx believed that under capitalism we are **“alienated” or “separated”** from our potential to creatively plan and control our collective fate. But if comprehensive socialist planning fails to work in practice—if, indeed, it is an impossibility, as we have learned from Mises and Hayek—then we cannot be “alienated” in Marx's use of the term. We cannot really be “separated” from our “potential” to comprehensively plan the economy if comprehensive planning is impossible.

Scientific Socialism

A staunch anti utopian, Marx claimed that his criticism of capitalism was based on the latest developments in science. He called his theory “scientific socialism” to clearly distinguish his approach from that of other socialists (Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier, for instance), who seemed more content to dream about some future ideal society without comprehending how existing society really worked (see socialism).

Marx's scientific socialism combined his economics and philosophy—including his theory of value and the concept of alienation—to demonstrate that throughout the course of human history, a profound struggle has developed between the

“**haves**” and the “**have-nots.**” Specifically, Marx claimed that capitalism has ruptured into a war between two classes: the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class that owns the means of production) and the proletariat (the working class, which is at the mercy of the capitalists). Marx claimed that he had discovered the laws of history, laws that expose the contradictions of capitalism and the necessity of the class struggle.

Critical Appraisal OF Marxism

- ❖ Marx was surely a profound thinker who won legions of supporters around the world. But his predictions have not withstood the test of time. Although capitalist markets have changed over the past 150 years, competition has not devolved into monopoly. Real wages have risen and profit rates have not declined.
- ❖ Nor has a reserve army of the unemployed developed. We do have bouts with the business cycle, but more and more economists believe that significant recessions and depressions may be more the unintended result of state intervention (through monetary policy carried out by central banks and government policies on taxation and spending) than an inherent feature of markets as such.
- ❖ Socialist revolutions, to be sure, have occurred throughout the world, but never were Marx’s theory had predicted—in the most advanced capitalist countries. On the contrary, socialism was forced on poor, so-called **Third World countries.**
- ❖ And those revolutions unwittingly condemned the masses to systemic poverty and political dictatorship. In practice, socialism absolutely failed to create a non alienated, self-managed, and fully planned society. It failed to

ENTRI

emancipate the masses and instead crushed them with statism, domination, and the terrifying abuse of state power.

- ❖ Nations that have allowed for private property rights and full-blown market exchange, in contrast to those “democratic socialist republics” of the twentieth century, have enjoyed remarkable levels of long-term economic growth. Free-market economies lift the masses from poverty and create the necessary institutional conditions for overall political freedom.
- ❖ Marx just didn’t get it. Nor did his followers. Marx’s theory of value, his philosophy of human nature, and his claims to have uncovered the laws of history fit together to offer a complex and grand vision of a new world order. If the first three-quarters of the twentieth century provided a testing ground for that vision, the end of the century demonstrates its truly utopian nature and ultimate unworkability.
- ❖ In the wake of communism’s collapse, traditional Marxism, which so many mainstream economists criticized relentlessly for decades, is now seriously questioned by a growing number of disillusioned radicals and former Marxists. Today there is a vibrant post-Marxism, associated with the efforts of those active in the scholarly journal *Rethinking Marxism*, for instance. Rather than trying to solve esoteric puzzles about the labor theory of value or offering new theoretical models of a planned economy, many of today’s sharpest post-Marxists appreciate marginal analysis and the knowledge and incentive problems of collective action. In this new literature, Friedrich Hayek seems to be getting a more positive reception than Marx himself. Exactly what will come out of these developments is hard to predict, but it is unlikely to look like the Marxism of the past.

ENTRI

- ❖ **Marxism has been subjected to severe criticism.** It has simplified the class division of society into two classes, the haves and the have nots. This is far from the reality.
- ❖ Society is very complex and is divided into numerous groups. There is no clear cut division of classes as envisaged by Marxism. Moreover, there exists a huge middle class. Marxian thinkers predicted that with the advancement of capitalism, the middle class would disappear and merge with the proletariat class. But this has not happened so far and there is no possibility of it ever happening. Infact, the reverse has happened;
- ❖ The middle class has strengthened its position and increased its size. Marxists also predicted the narrowing of the capitalist class. Here again, just the opposite has happened. Instead of shrinking, the base of the capitalist class has been enlarged.
- ❖ Marx predicted the accumulation of capital, but there has been the dispersal of capital. The condition of the proletariat class has not deteriorated as predicted by Marx. Thus, the actual working of the capitalist system has proved the Marxist theory of classes to be wrong
- ❖ Marxists had predicted that the inherent contradictions of capitalism would lead to its collapse. But this has not happened so far. No advanced capitalist system has collapsed.
- ❖ Capitalism has proved its resilience. It is the socialist system, which has collapsed in various parts of the world. Capitalism has the tremendous capacity of adaptation.
- ❖ This is the main reason for its survival. Marx failed to assess capitalism correctly.
- ❖ According to Marx, the proletarian revolution will occur only when capitalism has matured. There is no chance of the proletarian revolution occurring and succeeding in a backward feudal society. But this is exactly what has happened in reality.

ENTRI

- ❖ Revolution has taken place only in feudal societies such as Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba etc. This was the main issue of debate between two factions of Russian Marxists, the Mensheviks led by Plekhanov and the Bolsheviks led by Lenin. Ultimately, the Bolsheviks prevailed over the Mensheviks, but the latter were closer to classical Marxist teachings.
- ❖ According to Marx, his teachings can lessen the birth pangs, but cannot short circuit the various stages of social evolution. However, Lenin and Trotsky in Russia and Mao in China established communism in a feudal society without going through the process of first establishing capitalism.
- ❖ To resolve this obvious contradiction, Trotsky developed the 'theory of Permanent Revolution'. He fused the bourgeois revolution with the proletarian revolution in his theory. These two revolutions can occur simultaneously in the view of Trotsky. Though this seems to be a more practical view, it does not conform to the basic Marxian principles.
- ❖ The Marxian theory of economic determinism has been severely criticized. It is not only the economic factor, but other factors also that are equally important in bringing about social change. If the economy determines polity, society, morality, value system etc., then the economy itself is shaped by these. It is a two way process.
- ❖ Economic forces are not immune to the influences of polity, society, culture, religion, values, norms etc. If the base or the substructure shapes the superstructure, then the superstructure also shapes the substructure. Thus, the theory of economic determinism cannot be accepted. Later Marxist thinkers like Gramsci accepted the important role of the superstructure.
- ❖ The Marxian concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism suffer from several flaws. After the proletarian revolution, the proletariat will

seize the state apparatus from the bourgeois. With the establishment of communism, the state will become redundant and will gradually wither away. This has not happened.

- ❖ In socialist society, the state in fact became all-powerful. Instead of weakening, the state has consolidated its position and there is no possibility of its fading away. The Marxian dream of a stateless society will never be realized.
- ❖ The state will continue to play a leading role in a socialist and communist society and there is no possibility of it ever being relegated to the museum.
- ❖ The socialist state wherever it has been established, has either been overthrown or discredited. Wherever, it is still surviving, it has been compelled to introduce wide ranging changes, which do not conform to the teachings of classical Marxism.
- ❖ The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, disintegration of the Soviet Union and economic reforms in China have led thinkers like Francis Fukuyama to write the obituary of Marxism. Fukuyama in his famous book End of History proclaims the triumph of capitalism over communism in the post-cold war world.
- ❖ According to him, with the victory of capitalism over communism, history has come to an end. Here, Fukuyama talks of history in the Hegelian sense. After capitalism, there will be no further economic and political evolution. Capitalism is the most rational and perfect system.
- ❖ It is the most perfect ideology and philosophy. So ideological and philosophical
- ❖ Evolution comes to an end with the emergence of capitalism. Its main challenger communism has been defeated and this further proves its claim that it is the best possible social, economic and political system ever evolved by humanity.

ENTRI

- ❖ It is very difficult to accept the thesis proposed by Fukuyama. The importance of Marxism lies in two fields. Firstly, it has been used as a tool for social analysis.
- ❖ Secondly, it gives a voice to the voiceless. It is the philosophy of the poor, the oppressed and the suppressed people.
- ❖ If the contribution of Marxism is analyzed in these two fields, we will reach the conclusion that it is still relevant and has not
- ❖ become redundant as claimed by the liberal critics. Marxism as an approach of social analysis is still relevant as it was in the past. Its importance as a method of social analysis will never diminish, irrespective of whether the socialist state survives or not.
- ❖ Marxism as an ideology has definitely lost its edge, but it has not become totally redundant. As long as exploitation will continue, people will be oppressed and suppressed,
- ❖ Marxism will remain relevant. Marxism as a philosophy of the exploited and the oppressed will continue to inspire the masses to strive for their emancipation. So there is no question of its defeat and irrelevance. In Fact the systems, which have collapsed, were not organized on classical Marxian principles.
- ❖ They were a variant of Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism. So it is the Leninist-Stalinist systems, which have collapsed in Europe and elsewhere and not classical Marxism.
- ❖ Marxism as an approach will continue to be used by scholars for social analysis and the exploited-oppressed people will continue to espouse Marxist philosophy for their emancipation.
- ❖ Here, Marxism will never become irrelevant. It will always provide an alternative philosophy to liberalism. Marxism will also act as an effective

check on the excesses of liberalism. It will mitigate the rigors of the capitalist system.

V.L.Lenin : Ideas on Imperialism and party organization



Born at Sunburst in 1870 (April 22) Lenin had normal schooling. However, when he was taking his final school examination at the age of 16 his elder brother (Alexander) was charged of conspiring to kill the Tsar (King in Russia was known as Tsar) and was sentenced to death by the Tsarist regime. Despite all the trauma that this event brought to Lenin, he secured the highest possible marks in the school examination. After school, He joined Kazan University. It was during his stay at the University that Lenin began taking part in the various Student agitations which ultimately led to his expulsion from the University. Thereafter, he involved himself in revolutionary activities and soon became the leader of the Marxist group at St. Petersburg. He was arrested in 1895 by the Tsarist regime and exiled to Siberia.

It was there that he wrote his first major work - **Development of Capitalism in Russia (1899)**. In this work, he described how capitalism was growing in Russia during its initial phase. In 1900 He migrated to Geneva and joined Plekhanov's revolutionary group. He also started editing a paper aimed at Iskra in which he launched an anti-Tsarist campaign. In 1902, he wrote his second important work - What is to be done which deals with party organization.

In 1916 when the first world war had reached a very grim stage, Lenin produced his most incisive work Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism wherein he analyzed the phenomenon of imperialism. In October 1917, he assumed power in Russia. By doing so, Lenin earned the credit for the first successful Marxist revolution and that too, in a capitalistically less developed a country like Tsarist Russia where feudalism was deeply entrenched. Soon after the success of

During this revolution, Lenin started suffering from frequent strokes. His ill health forced him to gradually withdraw from the active governance of the Soviet Union.

However, during the few years that he lived after the success of his revolution, he laid the foundation of a socialist state which his successor, Joseph Stalin, developed into a super power in a short span of time.

Party as Vanguard of the Proletariat

There are several seminal contributions of Lenin to Marxist theory and practice.

Development of Capitalism in Russia, he tried to offer an interpretation of Tsarist Russia in Marxist terms. He argued that there was a large wage-labor class in Russia. However, he expressed the view that this wage labor class was not fully conscious of its exploitation. He further added that only the industrial proletariat (factory workers) was capable of articulating

the grievances of this whole class in the revolutionary direction. This could be done only by transcending local economic grievances and narrow trade unionism.

For this, there was a need for a national level political organization. Only such an organization could raise the level of political consciousness of the world by transforming the wage labor class into a revolutionary proletariat class capable of staging a successful revolution. Lenin indeed tried to do so in actual practice, The biggest task for him was to create a working class in Russia which was conscious of its exploitation. This in his view needed a communist organization,

but he realized that the autocratic Tsarist regime would not allow any such organization to operate openly. The only alternative was to operate underground in a clandestine manner.

In slim port, the problem for Lenin was how to do Lies twin tasks:

- (i) creating a national level organization of Russian wage workers and**
- (ii) raising their level of political consciousness.**

The Leninist strategy on these two issues is contained in his What is to be Done. In this work,

Lenin argued that in conditions prevailing in Russia there was a need for a Communist Party Which could act as a Vanguard of the Proletariat. (Stalin further elaborated this idea when they argued that a working class without a Communist Party was little like an army without the General staff). Lenin did not only emphasize the need of such a Communist Party in Russia, he also added that this vanguard party should consist of or at least be led by professional revolutionaries. Only then a successful revolution could be brought about.

You must have noticed that by malting this argument Lenin departed from the original Marxian position. In fact, the task which Marx had assigned to the proletariat class in staging a successful revolution

got transferred to the Communist Party as the vanguard of this class. Lenin's vanguard thesis was criticized by several of his contemporaries, particularly by a Polish Marxist Rosa Luxemburg. She argued that this would place the working class in the tutelage of the party. She also pointed out that due to Lenin's vanguard thesis, the worlds would lose all their initiative and become mere tools in the hands of the party. While she did not altogether deny the need of a well organized party and the role of able leadership in its functioning, she asserted that it would kill or at least blunt the self-emancipatory efforts of the working class

Democratic Centralism

Having a-trade the Communist Party as the vanguard of the proletariat, Lenin advocated a certain type of organizational structure for the party. His thesis is popularly known as '**democratic centralism**'. To put it in simple words, democratic centralism consisted of two elements: democracy and centralism. It meant that the hierarchical structure of tile Communist party should be such that each higher organ of the party should be elected by the lower organ and all the party matters should initially discuss freely at all the levels of the organization, from the lowest to the likeliest. However, once a decision has been taken by the highest organ it could be imposed strictly on all the lower organs and all of them must abide by it.

While theoretically democratic centralism has democracy as well as centralism, in actual practice

The party became less and less democratic and more and more centralized. Like the vanguard thesis, Lenin's views on democratic centralism were also criticized by several of his contemporaries.

Imperialism

E ▶ ENTRI

Marx in his analysis of capitalism had argued that in the task of overthrowing autocracy and Feudalism, the bourgeoisie plays a revolutionary role and brings about democracy and capitalism. This is called the '**bourgeois democratic revolution**'. It puts the bourgeoisie into power. Under the role of the bourgeoisie, capitalism would develop further.

Finally, it would reach a stage where the class contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat would become very sharp. This would create conditions for **proletarian socialist revolution** which would mark the demise of capitalism.

This prediction of Marx, however, did not prove true and the development of capitalism in Europe did not lead to proletarian socialist revolutions.

Lenin tried to explain why the Marxian prediction about the proletarian socialist revolutions and the demise of capitalism had not come true. Modern capitalists received a lease of life.

Capitalism, in his view, had grown so much that raw material and domestic markets in the capitalist countries were not enough to permit its further growth. Therefore, it had become necessary for these countries to find raw material and new markets for investment in Asia,

Africa and South America. Thus, capitalism was exported from Europe. It had acquired a **non-parasitic position** and had become reactionary. Due to colonization of Asia, Africa and in South America, capitalism had acquired a parasitic position. Thus, capitalism had reached its highest stage (imperialism) and had exhausted the historical mission of creating conditions for a proletarian revolution in different capitalist countries. However, capitalism in its imperialist manifestation had created conditions for a socialist revolution at the global stage.

Module V Modern Marxist Thinker

Gramsci: Ideas on Hegemony and Civil Society.



Italian Communist thinker, activist, and political leader Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) is perhaps the theorist most closely associated with the concept of hegemony. As Anderson notes, Gramsci uses “hegemony” to theorize not only the necessary condition for a successful overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat and its allies (e.g., the peasantry), but also the structures of bourgeois power in late 19th- and early 20th-century Western European states (SPN 20). Gramsci, particularly in his later work encompassed in the *Quaderni del Carcere* or Prison Notebooks (written during the late 1920s and early 1930s while incarcerated in a Fascist prison), develops a complex and variable usage of the term; roughly speaking, Gramsci’s **“hegemony”** refers to a process of moral and intellectual leadership through which dominated or subordinate classes of post-1870 industrial Western European nations consent to their own domination by ruling classes, as opposed to being simply forced or coerced into accepting inferior positions. It is important to note that, although Gramsci’s prison writings typically avoid using Marxist terms such as **“class,” “bourgeoisie,” and “proletariat”** (because his work was read by a Fascist censor),

Gramsci defines hegemony as a form of control exercised by a dominant class, in the Marxist sense of a group controlling the means of production; Gramsci uses **“fundamental group”** to stand in euphemistically for “class” (SPN 5 n1). For Gramsci, the dominant class of a Western Europe nation of his time was the bourgeoisie, defined in the Communist Manifesto as “the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labor,” while the crucial (because potentially revolution-leading) subordinate class was the proletariat, “the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor-power in order to live” (SPN 473 n5). Gramsci’s use of hegemony cannot be understood apart from other concepts he develops, including those of “state” and “civil society” (see Caste in India).

The idea of a **‘third face of power’, or ‘invisible power’** has its roots partly, in Marxist thinking about the pervasive power of ideology, values and beliefs in reproducing class relations and concealing contradictions . Marx recognised that economic exploitation was not the only driver behind capitalism, and that the system was reinforced by a dominance of ruling class ideas and values – leading to Engels’s famous concern that ‘false consciousness’ would keep the working class from recognising and rejecting their oppression .

False consciousness, in relation to invisible power, is itself a ‘theory of power’ in the Marxist tradition. It is particularly evident in the thinking of Lenin, who ‘argued that the power of ‘bourgeois ideology’ was such that, left to its own devices, the proletariat would only be able to achieve ‘trade union consciousness’, the desire to improve their material conditions but within the capitalist system’ .

A famous analogy is made to workers accepting crumbs that fall off the table (or indeed are handed out to keep them quiet) rather than claiming a rightful place at the table.

The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, imprisoned for much of his life by Mussolini, took these ideas further in his Prison Notebooks with his widely influential notions of 'hegemony' and the 'manufacture of consent' (Gramsci 1971). Gramsci saw the capitalist state as being made up of two overlapping spheres, a '**political society**' (which rules through force) and a '**civil society**' (which rules through consent).

This is a different meaning of civil society from the 'associational' view common today, which defines civil society as a 'sector' of voluntary organizations and NGOs. Gramsci saw civil society as the public sphere where trade unions and political parties gained concessions from the bourgeois state, and the sphere in which ideas and beliefs were shaped, where bourgeois 'hegemony' was reproduced in cultural life through the media, universities and religious institutions to 'manufacture consent' and legitimacy.

The political and practical implications of Gramsci's ideas were far-reaching because he warned of the limited possibilities of direct revolutionary struggle for control of the means of production; this 'war of attack' could only succeed with a prior '**war of position**' in the form of struggle over ideas and beliefs, to create a new hegemony (Gramsci 1971). This idea of a 'counter-hegemonic' struggle – advancing alternatives to dominant ideas of what is normal and legitimate – has had broad appeal in social and political movements. It has also contributed to the idea that '**knowledge**' is a social construct that serves to legitimate social structures

In practical terms, Gramsci's insights about how power is constituted in the realm of ideas and knowledge – expressed through consent rather than force – have inspired the use of explicit strategies to contest hegemonic norms of legitimacy.

ENTRI

Gramsci's ideas have influenced popular education practices, including the adult literacy and consciousness-raising methods of Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), liberation theology, methods of participatory action research (PAR), and many approaches to popular media, communication and cultural action.

The idea of power as '**hegemony**' has also influenced debates about civil society. Critics of the way civil society is narrowly conceived in liberal democratic thought – reduced to an 'associational' domain in contrast to the state and market – have used Gramsci's definition to remind us that civil society can also be a public sphere of political struggle and contestation over ideas and norms.

The goal of '**civil society strengthening**' in development policy can thus be pursued either in a neo-liberal sense of building civic institutions to complement (or hold to account) states and markets, or in a Gramscian sense of building civic capacities to think differently, to challenge assumptions and norms, and to articulate new ideas and visions.

GRAMSCI ON HEGEMONY

Antonio Gramsci was not the first person to speak about hegemony. But, he was the one who broadened the idea of hegemony. Earlier it was understood how hegemony was established to gain the political power but Gramsci was undoubtedly the first person to say that hegemony is an essential element for a ruling class of people to maintain its authority and power.

According to Roger Simon

“The starting point of hegemony is that a class and its representatives exercise power over subordinate classes by means of a combination of coercion and persuasion.”

- ❖ Perry Anderson is of the view that the term “hegemony” was first used by Plekhanov and other Russian Marxists in the 1880s. For Lenin hegemony is the workingclass gaining access to power with the support of the majority. But for Gramsci the idea was much broadened.
- ❖ Hegemony was not only about gaining power but it also meant maintaining that power.
- ❖ The State establishes this hegemony through other institutions which propagate the ideology of the State.
- ❖ In this regard Gramsci also speaks about the role of the party which helped to propagate the ‘counterculture’ before an attempt was made on state power. Unlike Marx, hegemony was more of a strategy to Gramsci.
- ❖ “The intellectuals of the historically (and concretely) progressive class (he wrote), in the given conditions, exercise such a power of attraction that, in the last analysis, they end up by subjugating the intellectuals of the other social groups; they thereby create a system of solidarity between all the
- ❖ intellectuals, with bonds of a psychological nature (vanity, etc.) and often of a cast character (technical-juridical, corporate, etc.).
- ❖ Gramsci was of the view that the revolution by the proletariat was impossible when the ruling class had its own hegemony. The intellectuals of the working class should actively participate to establish a counter hegemony.
- ❖ The working class should also come out of its narrow class interest and if necessary they need to make a compromise to form a unity with other social forces to create a larger counter hegemony. The

- nobility of Gramsci's idea of civil society is in his understanding of power relations.
- ❖ Typical Marxist understanding of the state denotes that the power lies in the hands of the state. But, Gramsci had a very different understanding of this. He observed various institutions in the state which helped the state to propagate its idea and directly helped it to maintain its hegemony.
 - ❖ So, the understanding of the relationship between state and its institutions are very important to understand Gramsci's idea of hegemony.

GRAMSCI ON STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The idea of hegemony was the central theme of Antonio Gramsci's thought. Antonio Gramsci mentions state and civil society in parts of the "**Prison Notebooks**".

Practically his ideas on state, civil society are scattered everywhere in his theoretical work.

David McLellan is of the view that "Although both Gramsci and Marx claimed to be getting their concept of civil society from Hegel, their use of the term was, in fact, very different. Whereas Marx used the expression civil society to mean the totality of economic relationships, **Gramsci used civil society to refer to the superstructure.**"

In this context Joseph Femia is of the view that "**For the classical Marxist tradition, civil society refers to the infrastructure, the totality of material conditions and relationships. But civil society in Gramsci's writings belongs to the superstructure, since it comprises ideological/cultural relations**"

Gramsci got influenced by the work of Croce and he imagined the state as an 'ethical state' or

'Cultural state' whose role will be to raise the population to a particular cultural level.

Gramsci is of the view that the school will play a very important role in this regard and on the other hand courts will play a very negative role. State according to Gramsci, was not only the apparatus of the government **but also the "private" apparatus of "hegemony" or civil society.**

It must be taken into note that there is a close relationship between Gramsci's idea of state, civil society and hegemony. Gramsci is of the view that "For it should be remarked that the general notion of State includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society (in the sense that one might say that **State = political society + civil society**, in other words hegemony protected by the armor of coercion).

So, in Gramsci's idea civil society and the state are interrelated but it is very confusing sometimes because in some other writings he also makes a clear distinction between the state and civil society

because in some other writings he also makes a clear distinction between the state and civil society and the political reality is established through that dialectical process. Fontana is of the view that

"Civil Society is the sphere in which a continual process of conflict and community, dissent and consent is generated. It is here that the dialectic between conflict and consensus, factional strife over particularistic ends and the generation of common goals, is conducted."

So, Gramsci's civil society performs **a democratic role**. Consensus and support is generated with debates and discussion. In Fontana's view this can be related with the **'war of position'**.

He says that

“In other words, it is here, in the sphere defined by civil society, that the war of position takes place.

As the term implies, the war of position presupposes consensus within the cultural/political and organizational body of the protagonists, but conflict and strife among and between them.”

It can be said without any doubt that Antonio Gramsci came out of the Marxist jinx of class relationships. It must be kept in mind the time in which Antonio Gramsci was writing. The rise of fascism shook his understanding of the world and he started perceiving things in a different way.

Many scholars give too much focus on his writings during his stay in the prison. But, to understand the grandeur of his ideas we must take a look into his early writings also.

Then only we can understand his process of ideological transformation. Both Marx and Lenin mentioned the role of the Party in revolution but he gave totally a new dimension to this idea.

He understood well the Fascist strategy of manipulating the working class and how to gain popular support from them.

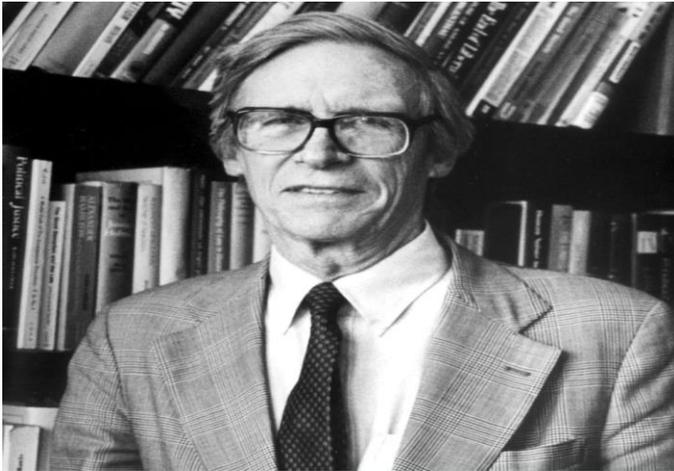
In that situation the revolutionary party should play a role to educate people culturally which will create a counter hegemony and finally topple the existing domination.

Gramsci's ideas gave hope to the working class that they can also climb up the societal ladder with their intellectual capability. But, to make them an organized party will play a very important role.

So, we can say that Gramsci conceived civil society as the safety valve of the state. If we see the present world order, we will see how the states are extending their area of influence through civil society organizations.

This is what Gramsci perceived during his time. But Gramsci prefers '**civil society**' more than state because civil society is characterized by ideological hegemony, while the state uses force to establish its own authority.

John Rawls : Justice and Liberalism



John Rawls's theory of justice is a sound theory which says that a well-ordered society needed a concept of justice as a basic requirement and that such a concept could be developed by rational individuals behind a 'veil of ignorance' about their own position, and that it would involve, primarily, equal right to basic liberties for all, and secondly that social and economic inequalities should derive from equal opportunities and in the end should benefit the least advantaged.

Life and major works:

John Rawls was born in 1921 in Baltimore, USA. He was a Fulbright fellow at Oxford in 1952. He was the Professor of Philosophy in the Universities of Princeton, Cornell, Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He died in 2002. His major works include the following:

1. 'Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics', *Philosophical Review* (1951)
2. 'Two Concepts of Rules', *Journal of Philosophy* (1955)
3. 'Justice as Fairness', *Philosophical Review* (1958)
4. 'Distributive Justice', *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (1967)

5. A Theory of Justice (1971)
6. 'Kantian Conservatism in Moral Theory', Journal of Philosophy (1980)
7. 'The Principles of Liberty and Their Priority', The Tanner Lecture on Humanities (1982)
8. 'Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical', Philosophy and Public Affairs (1985)
9. 'The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus', Oxford Journal of Legal Studies (1987)
10. 'The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good', Philosophy and Public Affairs (1988)
11. 'The Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus', New York University Law Review (1989).
12. Political Liberalism (1993)
13. The Laws of Peoples (1999)
14. Justice as Fairness: A Restatement (2001)

The time and influence:

Post-World War II era (1945 onwards):

- A general skepticism over the study of political philosophy – the 'end of ideology' debate.
- Erosion of values in the liberal democratic set up due to tensions in internal as well as external ambiances.
- The major political issues were: Civil Rights Struggle, Cold War, Vietnam War, etc.
- The liberal values and political set up were in crisis.

Rawls was deeply influenced by the liberal thinkers like John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Hume and others.

The core issue:

Rawls saw problems for the justification of liberal democratic order in American society during his times. In this context he offered a theoretical scheme for the systematic reconstruction and defense of the values of liberal democracy. In doing this Rawls demonstrated that because of the dependence and urgency of the political questions, they cannot be primarily philosophical in nature and they should be studied in reference to other social sciences, especially economics. He insisted that the method of political philosophy was essentially 'normative and impure' in nature.

The objective of the theory:

To provide a justification for political liberalism Rawls made an attempt to work out a theory of justice that would be appropriate for a **'well-ordered society'**.

To Rawls a well-ordered society or a good society should have two major aspects:

- i) A society "as one designed to advance the good of its members and effectively regulated by a public conception of justice".
- ii) " it is a society in which everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principle of justice and the basic social institutions satisfy and are known to satisfy these principles."

How to solve the problem of producing a universally acceptable set of moral and political principles given the fact of the presence of competing and often incommensurable values within modern societies?

Rawls argued that it was possible to envisage a class of hypothetical 'competent moral judges' who would be able to decide between competing moral and political ideals from a position of reasonableness

and impartiality and they would not be committed to the application of ideals derived from any of the moral standpoints within the society.

Rawls was worried to see the disagreement within the liberal democratic system regarding the way basic social institutions should be arranged if they were to conform to the freedom and equality of citizens as moral persons.

Justice as Fairness:

According to Rawls, justice should be regarded as a virtue of institutions, or 'practices', rather than of particular actions or persons. To him it was one among many virtues and not an all inclusive vision of a good society.

To him, "The question of fairness arises when free persons, who have no authority over one another, are enjoying a joint activity and amongst themselves settling or acknowledging the rules which define it and determine the respective shares in its benefits and burdens."

Distributive Justice:

Rawls was concerned with the distributive form of justice. To him, it "... is upon a correct choice of a basic structure of society, its fundamental rights and duties, that the justice of distributive share depends."

To find out the best possible way to make such a 'correct choice' Rawls revived the notion of social contract against the then dominant theories of utilitarianism and intuitionism.

As to him utilitarianism sacrificed individual freedom for the sake of common good. And intuitionism was also a weak theory to him as it left little for an individual's judgment guided by his reason.

Social contract theory allowed for the separation of justice – the right, from the notions of what would produce the most good. They should be separated because

there can be no natural agreement in modern states over competing ideas of the good. The virtue of justice is that it creates the possibility for competing ideals of the good to coexist within a relatively stable political order – which can be termed as a **'well-ordered society'**.

Defining justice:

The term **'justice'** originates from a Latin word *jus*, meaning a tie or a bond in English. Ernest Barker

says: "The function of justice may be said to be that of adjusting, joining or fitting the different political values....it is the reconciler and synthesizer of political values in their union in an adjusted

and integrated whole..." Barker also says: "The idea of justice resides in all minds, and it has been created and developed through the ages by a process of historical social thought, which has made it a common inheritance ... it is not an abstract conception but a social reality: an actual content of actual minds..."

To Rawls, "**Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory, however elegant and economical, must be rejected if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged, must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override.**"

Well-ordered society:

The necessity of a theory of justice arises from the fact that although "a society is a co-operative venture for mutual advantage, it is typically marked by a conflict as well as by an identity of interests." From the commonsense of sociology it is essential that a society requires a set of principles

for choosing between the possible arrangements for distributing advantages and for justifying an agreement on the 'proper distributive shares'.

For Rawls a society is "...well-ordered when it is not only designed to advance the good of its members but when it is also effectively regulated by a public conception of justice.

That is, a society in

which (i) everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principle of justice

(ii) the basic social institutions generally satisfy and are generally known to satisfy these principles."

How to achieve such a society?

'Justice as fairness' could only be accounted for from the standpoint of a hypothetical contract, which is not a device for entering a particular society or setting up a particular form of government, but the context in which the principles of justice appropriate for the basic structure of society are formulated. Here, Rawls was influenced by Locke, Rousseau and Kant.

The conditions for the contract:

The following are the four conditions that Rawls advocated for the successful conduct of a contract

leading to the formulation of the basic principles of justice for a well-ordered society.

1. 'Circumstances of justice' or 'natural fact':

Under the influence of Hume Rawls considered that men are bound by incomplete knowledge, limited attention and limited capacity of judgment – these conditions are 'natural', not artificial, alterable or modifiable.

2. 'Original / initial position':

According to Rawls, "... what would emerge from such a hypothetical condition would be those principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their

own interest would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association.”

3. ‘Veil of ignorance’:

He also said: “Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength and the like. I shall even assume the parties do not know their conception of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance.”

4. ‘Maximin rule’:

In such a condition as mentioned above, Rawls, under the influence of the ‘game theory’ of modern economics, expected the rational individual would rank alternatives by their worst possibilities. Those alternatives will be adopted, the worst outcome of which is superior to the worst outcomes of the others. A person would choose for the design of a society in which even his enemy is to assign him his place.

The outcome of the contract:

Rawls expected that two principles of justice would be chosen on the basis of the ‘original position’:

- 1. First:** each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others.
- 2. Second:** social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all.

Later on Rawls modified these principles and presented them in the following way:

- Each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all,

ENTRI

- Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions. First, they must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society.

Priority rules:

Rawls advanced two cases of 'priority rules' in respect to the above principles:

- i) A less-extensive liberty must strengthen the total system of liberty shared by all;
- ii) A less than equal liberty must be acceptable to those citizens with the lesser liberty.

Basic structure of the society:

According to Rawls these principles are applicable to the 'basic structure' of the society. The basic structure can be divided into two aspects:

- i) Those aspects of social system that define and secure the equal liberties of citizenship, e.g., political liberty, freedom of speech and assembly, liberty of conscience, freedom of thought, right to hold property, freedom from arbitrary arrest.
- ii) Those aspects that specify and establish social and economic inequalities, e.g., distribution of income, wealth and of authority.

Rawls also emphasized that there is no need for economic equality for implementing the principles of justice, but the need is for a pattern of economic distribution to the benefit of the least advantaged and as complete as possible openness of all positions of authority.

To him there is no favorite economic system for the implementation of these principles, it depends on the 'traditions, institutions and social forms of each country'.

Significance of the theory:

The theory aims at setting out an 'Archimedean point' in terms of which different societies would be assessed. It aims to arise at a state of affairs that Rawls called as 'reflective equilibrium'.

But he always insisted that the theory was open to further modification, which he did during the late nineteen seventies and eighties.

Further modifications:

Major modifications done by Rawls himself on the theory are as following:

- ❖ Justice as fairness is to be regarded as a specifically political and not a metaphysical theory. He says: "...in a constitutional democracy the public conception of justice should be, so far as possible, independent of controversial philosophical and religious doctrines."
- ❖ It is important to make a distinction between procedural neutrality and neutrality of aim. While justice as fairness is not designed to favor any particular moral doctrine, it is impossible to resist the social order to aid some and hinder others.
- ❖ Social unity in a 'well-ordered society', can only take the form of an 'overlapping consensus' in which the political conception of justice as fairness is affirmed by citizens who themselves hold conflicting moral, political and religious doctrines.

Critical appreciation:

- **P.H. Nowell Smith and B. Williams:** It is a fundamental mistake to expect a greater degree of precision than a subject matter will allow. Politics is not and can not be an exact science.

- **H.L.A. Hart:** The precise meaning of Rawls's argument is unclear, there is clearly no direct deduction of the two principles of justice from the 'original position', nor is there a definitive accounting for the 'primacy of liberty'.
- **Amartya Sen:** The principle of "priority of liberty" can be questioned: "Why should the status of intense economic needs, which can be matters of life and death, be lower than that of personal liberties?"
- **F.A. Hayek:** The search for social justice is to chase after a mirage.
- **Robert Nozick:** The quest for distributive justice requires more than a minimalist state.
- **C.B. Macpherson:** It is a fundamental mistake to separate distribution from production in the consideration of justice.
- **Sandel and McIntyre:** It is impossible to affirm rights and liberties without the moral doctrines or ideas of good society.

Uniqueness and relevance of Rawls:

- Rawls made a radical departure from his predecessors in the field by not getting concerned with mere conceptual analysis, but by constructing a theory of justice to face real political problems and issues.
- His theory is deeply rooted in liberal democratic traditions as he revived the idea of Social Contract as depicted by Locke, Rousseau and Kant in contrast with utilitarianism and intuitionism.
- He revived the tradition of English language political thought which was on the verge of extinction after John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859) and Henry Sedgwick's *The Method of Ethics* (1874).

ENTRI

- Even his critics like Robert Nozick had to say that Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* was such a "powerful, deep, subtle, wide-ranging, systematic work" that political philosophers must now "either work within Rawls's theory or explain why not."
- Amartya Sen also recognized it as "...the most influential – and in many ways the most important – of contemporary theories of justice..." *

