**IR 111 History of Political Thought**

**What is History of Political Thought?**

It focuses on political thinkers and their ideas and theories in the course of history.

**Outline of History of Political Thought**

Western political thought can be historically divided into 4 periods:

Political thought in *Ancient Times*, *Medieval Times*, *Early Modern Times* and *Modern Times*. In each period, political thought has a prevailing vision.

1. In ancient times, political thought had a philosophic vision. “Philosophic” in a double sense: First, philosophic approach attempts to explore the nature of ultimate ends or values. Second, philosophy is regarded as the greatest value in human life by the classical thinkers. In that period, political thinkers were preoccupied with the “best life” or human needs. The state in terms of this philosophic vision would assume the form of the highest embodiment of reason.

2. In medieval times, the emphasis shifts from the best life to human powers and abilities. In this period, political thought had a religious vision. Thinkers were preoccupied with the problem of salvation of the soul. The state in terms of this religious vision would be seen as an extension of the church

3. In early modern times, for the first time there appears “pure” political thought. The growth of scientific knowledge and the confidence in human powers and abilities made political thought “civic”. Hence attention is focused on human relations. Human relationship was conceived as legal or “civic” relationship. The state was seen as a unique and independent human association.

4. Finally in the modern age, political thought had a social vision. Politics began to be understood in the broader framework of “society”. Hence attention is mainly focused on social problems connected with equality, freedom and social justice. The state in this period would appear in the form of a partnership or an association with positive goals and purposes.

**Political Thought in Ancient Times**

Political thought in ancient Greek, appeared in the 4th century, at a time when the independent city-states were already in decline. Political life in ancient Greek was limited to city-states known as “polis”. These city-states was very small. Their populations was ranging from 10.000 and 100.000. The populations of these city-states were often based on single tribes, but larger ones were inhabited by mixed tribes.

The population of a city-state was divided into 3 main classes: *Slaves, Foreigners, Citizens*: There were slaves at the bottom of the social scale. They had no political rights. Slavery was a universal institution in the ancient world.

The second social class was composed of the resident foreigners (metics). The foreigners, like slaves, had no right to join Greek political life.

Finally, citizens were on the top of the social scale and entitled to participate in political life. The citizen body was composed of warriors, sailors, merchants and farmers.

**Political Institutions in Ancient Greek**

Although Greek philosophy was esentially abstract and metaphysical, it never lost its links with life.

1.Ecclesia (assembly) was a town meeting which every citizen at the age of 20 or above, was entitled to attend. It was a legislative body in which citizens made decisions concerning the city-state.

2. The council of 500 was mainly the executive body of the city. Athens was composed of 10 tribes and each tribe sent 50 people to be elected respectively. The council was chosen popularly.

3. The were courts which functioned as judiciary. Athenian courts were important for Athenian democracy. Their duty, like any other court, was to render judicial decisions in particular cases.

Consequently, the popularly chosen council and its responsibility to the Assembly and the independent juries were the characteristic institutions of Athenian democracy. In 5th century Athens, under Pericles, has been seen as the highest point of ancient Greek “democracy”. The Athenian lived in an atmosphere of discussion and conversation. The Athenians of the 5th BC century engaged in public or political affairs.

**The First Philosophers in Ancient Greek**

The philosophy in Ancient Greek can be traced back to the 6th century BC. During that time, there was a speculation about the nature of the universe, what would be called “philosophy”. Thales, who is assumed to be the founder of philosophy, was in search of the nature of the universe. For him, water is the basic substance of the universe.

Then, Anaximenes and Anaximender formed the Ionian school of natural philosophy. From the point of Anaximenes, the basic element of the universe is air. As for *Aneximender, it is apeiron*.(ambiguous and amorphous matter).

Heracleitos advocates that the basic substance of the universe is fire.

In Empedocles’s view, the universe consisted of four basic elements: earth, fire, air and water.

In the 5th century appeared the “Sophists”. In this period, the philosophical emphasis shifts from nature to human being. The term “sophists” denotes professional teachers who acquired great skill in debating and demolishing an opponent’s arguments by persistent questioning, the technique which came to be called “dialectic”.

For example, Protagoras as a sophist, said his famous saying, “man is the measure of all things” In other words, knowledge is the creation of the senses and other human faculties.

From this naive materialism, philosophy gradualy moved in the direction of idealism, reaching its climax in Plato and Aristotle.

**Plato**

He was a student of Socrates and as he said, he carries ideas of Socrates. His work provided the first systematic examination of political thought. In particular, his work named “republic” is the first great work in political thought. So far, he has been judged the real intellectual founder of *Christianity* as well as *communism*, a *revolutionary* as well as a *reactionary* *conservative* and even *fascist*.

He experienced the turbulence following the demise of Athenian democracy and the loss of Athenian hegemony to Sparta as a result of the Peloponnesian War. On the other hand, Socrates’ tragic death left a deep mark upon his mind.

1.Plato essentialy advocates a closed, perfectly shaped and ordered state which is ruled by the best and where everyone minds his own business.

2.He is in search of the “good society” or the ideal society, the correct definition of “justice”. It is to be noted that his notion of justice is much wider than today’s term.

3.His notion of justice consists of not only legal or administrative justice, but also “moral duty” or “right ordering of the society”

He demolishes two major argumets concerning justice

1.The first argument is that justice is simply the interest of the stronger party or group in the state.(*asserted by Thrasymachus, the Sophist*)

2.The other one is that justice is based on human convention (*asserted by Glaucon and Adeimantus, the Sophists*)

And Plato attempted to show that justice is something objective, real, rooted in the nature of man and society.

**Plato’s notion of the state**

The origin of the state: For him, the state arises out of human need. Men have different skills and capabilities which serve their mutual advantages. Hence they tend to live in groups where there is an elementary division of labour.

Defence: Since human need is unlimited, enmity arises among members of a group or among groups. Neighbours will covet one another’s wealth. Wars will occur between cities. Hence there is another group of people whose task is defence. This group is composed of what he calls “guardians” and “auxilaries” Guardians are rulers.

The pyramid of the state is made up of 3 layers:

1.*Guardians*, rulers are on the top of the state.

2.*Auxilaries*, soldiers are in the middle of the state.

3.*Producers*, numerically the largest group, are at the base of the state.

The most important thing, Plato advocates, is that there should always be a clear distinction between these groups.

Plato’s political thought is related to two elements: The first one is related to his general philosophy. The other one is related to his view of human nature.

**Plato’s General Philosophy**

To take the first of these, Plato’s general philosophy which is metaphysical, is characterized as “idealism” in the Western tradition. He distinguishes between two realms: One is the realm of time and space. Objects here are perceived by the sense organs. Change and process continually take place.

The other realm is outside time and space, the realm of “forms” or “ideas”. Objects here are perceived by the mind. Nothing changes. For Plato, knowledge is concerned with not changing particulars, but permanent universals. In other words, real knowledge is the kowledge of the forms.Within this framework, his notion of justice is something objective and takes place in the realm of forms. All general notions, like justice, express universal qualities and make up the “real world”. They are stable, static and objective.

**Plato’s Viev of Human Nature**

Plato’s notion of justice is related to his account of human nature. For him, man is the miniature replica of the state. Therefore justice is not a matter of external behavior, but of the inward self. Plato suggests symbolically that human nature consists of “gold”, “silver” and “bronze” Thats to say, human nature is composed of philosophic, spirited and appetitive elements.

Philosophic part of human nature is the desire and capacity for knowledge.

Spirited part of human nature is the passionate impulse towars combat and victory. It loves the fight.

Appetitive part of human nature is concerned with material things such as food, cloth and luxuries.

For Plato, these 3 elements are present in every person and different dispositions are dominant in different individuals. Gold symbolizes philosopher, silver symbolizes warrior and bronze symbolizes producer. The philosophic element rules, because it alone knows the virtues of all classes of society. In plato’s view, philosophy is the most important thing in the earthly life of man. Moreover, philosophy also provides the one and the only key to heaven.

**Aristotle (384-322 BC.)**

He was a student of Plato. But his impact on the development of Western thought has been even more pervasive than Plato’s. He is regarded as the real founder of political philosophy and political science. He was not only a speculative thinker, but also a keen observer. He wrote on a wide range of subjects including metaphysics, aesthetics, ethics, biology, physics, logic and politics. But here we will focus on his political thought in particular.

**Aristotle’s General Philosophy**

In order to understand his political thought, it would be useful to dwell upon his general philosophy briefly. Aristotle’s starting-point is the Platonic theory of forms. Like Plato, Aristotle also has a conception of “metaphysics”, a realm of eternal and unchanging entities. However he affirms an integrated, harmonious vision of the universe. He criticized Plato sharply for holding that immaterial “forms” existed separately and independently of material and sensible objects. In contrast, he holds that reality is made up of form and matter . Neither of them could exist independently of the other.

**Aristotle’s view of human nature**

For him, the study of politics is the master science, because the organization and activity of the state determine all aspects of life. He sees man as naturally social and political: Man is a political animal. Like a plant, man has a natural goal. And man’s telos is to realize the potential of his natural capacities which are reason, speech and moral choice.

The best way to develop man’s natural capacities is to participate in the government of polis or small democratic community. Thus, Aristotle affirms citizen participation in the common life or the community affairs.

**His notion of the state**

Aristotle points out that the state is not like an individual, but a plurality of families and households whose separate material interests constitute the political community.

Aristotle sticks to the ideal of the city. The state or polis is the highest human association. Polis allows people to meet and discuss the common good and to develop their human faculties. He thinks that the ideal state should be economically self-sufficent, but limited in size. He is in favour of owners of property. Because he thinks that owners of property are capable of performing the functions of citizenship. Such as participating in judicial procedures and fulfilling offices of the state.

In Aristotle’s vision, every state has 3 parts or social classes:

There are *the very rich*, *the very poor* and *the middle class*. The rich and the poor are the extreme groups and they don’t obey the voice of reason.

The rich people tend to become violent criminals.

The poor class tends to be rogue and offender.

The middle class, in contrast, is the most law-abiding group in the state. They tend to embody the principle of equality, which is the principle of citizenship and hence ideal presupposition of the state.

**Hellenistic Thought** (323-146 BC.)

Hellenistic Age is the period between the death of Alexander in 323 BC. and the final conquest of Greece by Rome in 146 BC. It was a period of continous war, revolutions against the crumbling Macedonian Empire and struggles among the kingly successors of Alexander.

Greek political unit, the city-state had perished with Alexander. The city-states came under the huge impersonal empires, starting from Alexander the Great, through the Hellenistic succession-states, the Roman Republic and finally Byzantium.

These developments had some impacts on political life. The previous account of politics and citizen were disappearing. In this age, there was gradually emerging an individual who was something more than a citizen, a society that was wider than any possible political unit, and a humanity more extended than any single race; individualism and cosmopolitanism are the typical characteristics of the newer aspects of political philosophy.

There was only one theoretical outlook in politics and this is the philosophy of withdrawal from political life. It is the dominant thought in the Hellenistic Age.

There were no positive ideas for improvement of political and social life.

There was no analysis of empire or the role of city-states in confederated unions.

The classical Greeks believed that the good life of the individual must take place in a good state. So individual and social virtue cannot be separated.

But, in the Hellenistic Age, political life was so bad and philosophers emphasized individual virtue alone. They attempted to separate the good life entirely from the political life.

Self control was more important than citizenship.

**Cynicism**

The founder of the Cynic school is Antisthenes (445-365 BC). Cynic school is concerned with individual happiness. For Cynics, self-sufficiency is happiness.

The wise man ought to be completely self-sufficient. Wise man should be indifferent to pleasure. Because desire for pleasure makes people too dependent on things outside them. Cynics seek to make man’s happiness completely independent of external conditions and accidents of fortune.

Moreover, in Cynics’ view, good reputation, property, family life, marriage, learning and citizenship are not important for individual happiness.

They opposed to the city-state and the social classifications upon it rested.

They challenged all the customary distinctions of Greek social life such as rich-poor, Greek-barbarian, citizen-foreigner and so on.

**Ideal society**

The political thought of the Cynics is utopian. They sketched an ideal society in which property, marriage and government disappeared.

The ideal society is for wise men only. The wise man is equally at home everywhere and nowhere. He requires neither home nor country, neither city nor law. Because wise man’s own virtue is a law to him.

For Diogenes, a virtuous man is a citizen of the world or a cosmopolitan

But, cosmopolitanism does not imply a world empire or the unity of mankind.

Cynic cosmopolitanism is rather individualistic. Cynics pursue happiness by becoming independent of external things.

**Epicureanism**

Epicureanism is a doctrine of personal morality. Epicurus (341-270 BC.) is the founder of this teaching. He was primarily concerned with ethics which was taken from the materialism of Democritus. To summarize the system of Democritus,

Democritus taught that the whole being is composed of tiny atoms and the void in which they move.

The atoms are uncreated and undestructible.

They are qualitatively the same, differing only in size, shape and weight.

Causal relationship between atoms are mechanical in nature.

Man also is subject to mechanical law.

**His view of human nature**

Epicurus adopted a materialist viev of human nature. He denied the immortality of the soul and asserted that pleasure and pain were the fundamental determinants of human conduct. For him, the highest value is individual happiness. A good live consists of the enjoyment of pleasure. According to Epicureanism, all men are essentially selfish and seek only their own good.

The consequences of an action may bring more pain than pleasure. The wise man should avoid such an action, that brings pain. For example, sensual pleasures, family pleasures, honors in politics and society may cost too much. In relation to politics, wise man should keep away from politics. Because it may cost too much and give pain. In political live, the individual’s happiness may be dependent on others and may lose his freedom. There is nothing to do with politics unless circumstances compel us to do so.

**The notion of the state**

According to Epicurus, men naturally seek government or political justice. The state is formed for the sake of obtaining security, especially against the depredations of others. Political and social institutions are the outcome of man’s experience. The Epicureans affirm any form of government which allow them to go their own way, to pursue their own good. Here, in a way, the social contract theory is implied.

On the other hand, like the Sophists, the Epicureans adopt the notion of justice that it is based on convention. Justice is made by convention, not discovered by reason. That’s to say, the concept of justice varies from place to place, time to time. Social groups formulate their ideas of justice on the basis of their actual needs and wants. If conditions changed, then the rules of justice should also change.

**Stoicism**

The founder of the Stoic school is Zeno of Cyprus. Zeno was born in Cyprus around 336 BC. And died in 262 BC. He founded the Stoic school around 300 B.C.

**General Philosophy of Stoicism**

Now, it would be useful to dwell upon the general philosophy of Stoicism.

Zeno rejected both Plato’s transcendental theory of forms and Aristotle’s doctrine of immanent form. For him, all knowledge derives from sense-perception (empiricism).

Stoics believed that every kind of being was material and corporeal.

They believed in one God, but they held that God was also material.

God represented “primal fire” from which the universe came into existence.

Moreover, reason as the essential attribute of God was governing the the world.

The universe is governed by God in terms of a system of “law”.

Stoics believed that the operation of this law was universal, eternal, absolute and rigid.

**The Stoic account of Human Nature**

For the Stoics, human conduct is determined by reason. In other words, the human being is is absolutely determined by the law of the universe.

It is man’s nature to follow the dictates of reason. Reason prescribed that man should pursue “virtue”.

1. The first great principle of Stoicism is “independence”. One may not be able to control what happens to him, but he can control the attitudes he takes to it. They held that passions are irrational and should be suppressed. The only freedom for man is to control his emotions.

2. The only way to develop the sense of independence is an attitude of apathy (indifference). A wise man can be apathetic when he realize that the whole nature is divine or determined by Logos (divine wisdom).

3. Stoic apathy is justified by the principle of harmony with nature. Virtue consists in living in harmony with Nature. Human emotions such as fear and sorrow are unnatural and unnecessary. The wise man practices self-control and suppress all desire and emotions.

The wise man co-operates with rational necessity and strives to achieve a state of apathy or indifference, “without passion”. This means that a wise man must be indifferent to such conventional goals as long life, food, wealth, and power. When we accept the universe as it is, we are truly virtuous.

**Political Implications of Stoicism**

The Stoics rejects the city and the state as the source of men’s significance and dignity.

The Stoics argue that all men have a divine soul which is rational in nature.

The Stoics added a universal dimension that was missing in Cynicism and in Epicureanism.

Stoicism emphasized the idea that all men live in one universe under one law and one sovereign. All men are citizens of one world, brothers who are equal in their dependence upon a common sovereign which is Reason.

The law is not the law that particular state promulgate, but is a law applicable to all men everywhere. It stems from the rational divinity of the universe itself.

This dignity and rationality which are common to all, transcend political boundaries.

All are citizens of the world. All men are brothers.

**Contributions of Stoicism to the History of Political Thought**

1. Discovering for the first time the importance of the individual, Stoicism invented the concept of the broderhood of man.
2. Rejecting societies in general, Stoicism discovered a wider one, the concept of humanity.
3. Stoicism pointed out the existence of natural law, a law that was superior to conventional law.

**Roman Thought**

The history of Rome may usefully be divided into 3 periods:

1.The *Republic* (509-146 B.C.) 2.The *Time of Troubles* (146-27 B.C.) 3.The *Empire* (27 B.C.-180 A.D.)

**1.The *Republic* (509-146 B.C.)**

Latin aristocracy who called themselves “patricians”, expelled the last Etruscan king from Rome and abolished the kingdom. The latins, instead of kingdom, established the Republic in Rome. The term “republic” derives from the latin “Res publica”, meaning “for the public”. Rome was one of many small cities in Italy. By the middle of the 3rd century, Rome had become the dominant city on the peninsula.

**The Political Institutions in Rome**

Now, let’s dwell upon the political institutions in Rome. The Roman political life was rested upon “civitas”, a city-state. Rome began its history as a city-state and through ruled by the kings in the early period, established a republic in the 6th century B.C. The government of the Roman Republic was something between democracy and oligarchy. The patricians were men of property: They were full citizens and had most of the political power. The plebeians were partial citizens and numerically larger than the patricians. While the plebeians had little political power and certain rights. They were not all poor.

The Basic political institutions were

a.The *Senate* b.The *Assembly* c.*Administrative officers*.

a.The Senate was composed entirely of patricians and appointed by censors, carrying on the regular business of government and having the right to veto the actions of the Assembly.

b.The Assembly was composed of patricians and plebeians and elected by the centuries (a hundred soldiers) of the army. This assembly exercised legislative powers. The patricians always had a majority in the assembly.

C.Administrative officers: The most important of these were 2 consuls who were patricians. The consuls had the right to veto each other’s power. Just below them were the praetors who came to exercise a variety of power: governors of provinces, military leaders and judges.

By the end of the 4th century, the government was liberalized somewhat. The plebeians acquired their own Assembly. (called the Tribal Assembly to distinguish it from the older Centuriate Assembly.

**2.The Time of Troubles (146-27 B.C.)**

The period between the expanding republic and the stable empire was a time of turmoil for Rome. The disparity between the economic classes kept under control in the early days, but later the gap between the classes got wider. Some Romans were extremely rich, but the masses were impoverished.

The political institutions were unable to deal effectively with the special political and economic problems. The Roman army, however, remained the best in the world. Julius Caesar, a succesful and ambitious general, gained control in 45 BC., after defeating his enemies in various parts of the Roman world. He took over the powers of the government and completely dominated the Senate. After a shory period of statesmanship and reform, he was assassinated by a group of senator in 44 B.C..

**3.The Empire (27 B.C.-180 A.D.)**

In 30 B.C. Octavian, Caesar’s grandnephew transformed the Republic into an Empire. He viewed himself as “the restorer of the Roman Republic”. Octavian was known to his people as “revered emperor” or Augustus Caesar. Only the forms of old polity were preserved. The Senate and the Assembly were preserved. But these bodies never challenged “the restorer”.

For example, Octavion established a system of administration which provided efficient rule for the widespread provinces. Citizenship was widely extended. This period was recognised as years of peace, “Pax Romana”. They were years of justice, too, for the Roman legal system was in effect.

**Polybius**

He was essentially a Greek. But he was brought to Rome in 168 B.C. as one of a thousand hostages taken after a Roman victory over Macedon. Polybius was both a politican and a historian. He was a great admirer of Rome and its political institutions.

**The General Philosophy of Polybius**

Polybius advocates a cyclical view of history. He argued that knowledge of the past will save men (especially statesmen) from errors in the present. Humanity is in the endless process of degeneration and generation respectively. There is an endles cycle. Following that, the systems of government turn to each other. Monarchy degenerates into a tyranny, then tyranny returns to its original stage. In the same way, aristocracy degenerates into an oligarchy and vice versa.

**Political Thought**

Polybius examined the Roman political system in detail. For him, the Roman polity had admirable qualities that gave it strength and stability. The greatest advantage that Rome had, was its “mixed constitution” That constitution was embracing features of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. In the consuls it had monarchy, in the Senate it had aristocracy, and in the Assemblies, democracy.

Each checked and balanced the other. Nothing excessive was done. By the contrast, any one of the simple forms was likely to degenerate.

The idea of a mixed constitution is not original with Polybius. Plato suggested such a polity in *Laws*, and Aristotle explicitly commended it in the *Politics*. What was unique in Polybius was his conception of the interaction of different branches of government. His mixed constitution is not, like Aristotle’s a balance of social classes but of political powers. He stresses rather the institutional system of checks and balances.

It is worth noting that, his idea of the nature of the mixed form of government influenced Montesquieu and the framers of the United States Constitution.

**Cicero**(106-43 B.C.)

Cicero is the most important figure of the middle period of Roman history. He is not an original philosopher at all, but a statesman and a writer. He studied law in Rome and philosophy in Athens.

From both Plato and Aristotle, Cicero accepted the idea that life in society is natural and good and that the statesman is the noblest of men. From Polybius, he accepted the doctrine of a mixed constitution. Moreover, Cicero was influenced by Stoicism.

Cicero’s political outlook was based upon the belief that old traditions are the best. In spite of the discontent of the impoverished masses, he looked to the ancient republican virtues to solve the economic problems of the day.

**Natural Law**

Cicero emphasized the concept of natural law as the Stoic concept. For him, natural law is “a true law in accordance with nature, applies to all men and is unchangeable and eternal.” Although it is known by reason, its ultimate sanction is God. Natural law is always right and is everywhere applicable.

Natural law involves individual rights. All men subject to the same law and reason. So they are equal. While inequalities of ability and wealth necessarily exist, all men are of equal worth. All men are equal before natural law. And if positive law is good and properly administered, they are equal before that too. Cicero went further in his doctrine of brotherhood. He spoke of love as the foundation of law. Cicero believe that men have natural inclination to love their fellow men.

**Cicero’s Notion of the State**

His conception of the state is based upon his philosophy of law (natural law).

Natural law prescribed the conduct of a good state. The good state is concerned to preserve just relations between individuals. In other words, the state is good to the degree that its laws reflect natural law. The good state is not merely a good organization of the social classes; it is a community of equals under natural law.

And the state is just to the degree that its laws recognize and protect the rights of every individual.

Finally, Cicero defines the state as “*the coming together of a considerable number of men who are united by a common agreement about law and rights and by the desire to participate in mutual advantages*.”

The state is the property of all. The state derives its authority from the people. Therefore it exists to serve their moral interests. Cicero, however, was not arguing for democratic institutions. Because he was too distrustful of the masses for that. He just stresses that all political power derives from the people who live under it and that consent legitimizes authority. Cicero believed that the people expressed itself best, not in democratic elections but through the institutions of the old aristocratic republic. He looked to the past for political forms.On the other hand, the good individual is a citizen devoted to the improvement of the state

As a practicing lawyer, Cicero studied the positive law of his day and aided in its development. But in Stoicism, he found a conception of a higher law. Under Cicero’s influence, the Roman conception of law came to be a dual one. Roman law as *jus gentium*, was examined in the light of *jus naturale* and developed into a blend of the practical and the theoretical. Thus Cicero was the perfect spokesman for Roman jurisprudence and Stoic political theory.

**John of Salisbury** (1115-1180)

John’s great work in political theory, completed around 1159, was *Policraticus* (*The Statesman’s Book*). It was the first systematic political treatise of the Middle Ages. The book was obviously indebted to Cicero, although the conception of the state was a centralized one, and the monarch was described along absolutist lines. While most of John’s ideas could be found in medieval times, his concept of a kingdom unified by a strong monarch distinguished it from the feudal theories and practices of his day.

**His Notion of the State**

John advocated an organic theory of the state. For him, the state is like a physical organism. “Ministers of God” corresponds to the soul; the ruler corresponds to the head; with judges and governors corresponding to eyes, ears, and tongue; officials and soldiers are the hands; and peasants are the feet. John said that the health of the body as a whole, depends upon the health and proper relationship of all its parts. The state, too, is something more than a sum of its parts, and its welfare depends upon their health and proper relationship.

For John, “the interdependence and mutual cooperation of specialized social groups was an essential feature of the political bond” His political theory can be said to be a conservative one. The foot cannot perform the functions of the head, nor the eye those of the stomach. John reflected the medieval notion that places in feudal society were not interchangeable. His theory preserved the medieval sense of unity, placing both prince and priest in the same natural body.

**His Notion of the Ruler**

John makes a distinction between a good prince and a bad one. He advocates that a good ruler should be a good prince. The prince is “the public power and a kind of likeness on earth of the divine majesty” There are two major requirements for a good prince:

The first is that John recognizes the superiority of the spiritual sword. The prince is dependent on the Church for his faith and morals. But John also held that the political work of the prince may be judged by priests, while the priests can only be judged by God. The prince bears the sword on behalf of the Church. The Church can grant and withhold power. The prince is a faithful but inferior servant of the Church.

The second requirement for a good prince is that he rule justly according to law. He should strive for equity. In discovering the requirements of law, he should look for the natural or divine order of things and subordinate his will to that order. He is dependent on the priesthood because true law must embody the principles of Christian justice.

**His Conception of the Tyrant**

According to John, if a prince fails these requirements, he becomes a tyrant. Secular power does come from God and should be obeyed. But it comes from God, not directly, but through the Church. Therefore, it is possible that the Church may succeed in deposing the secular power. John suggested the stronges punishment for the ruler who exercised political power badly. If the ruler behaves like a tyrant, the people may stand free of his rule and subjection.

**Renaissance**

The period from the fall of Constantinople (1453) to the end of the sixteenth century has often been spoken of as the Renaissance. In the 15th century many explorers sought new routes to the far East. These overseas explorations had a stimulating effect on commerce. Trade increased both in volume and in geographical scope. A money economy gradually replaced the medieval barter (exchange) system and a new social class of merchants and bankers challenged the dominance of the feudal landowners. Politically, the period witnessed the rise of large centralized territorial states. The commercial class and the great princes collaborated in breaking the declining power of feudal ties and restrictions.

**Main Elements of the Renaissance**

While the Renaissance did not make a complete break with the past, it must be asserted that the art, literature, and general culture of Europe began to manifest a new spirit in the fourteenth century. This new spirit was early most evident in Italy. It eventually spread through all of western and northern Europe and gave modern thought much of its essential character. Three elements of the Renaissance spirit will be discussed here: classicim, secularism, and individualism.

**a. Classicism**

Classicism is a literary movement, a system of values and norms describing in form and content all the works of art created in Ancient Greece and Rome. It is a literary movement which deals with human and natural objects rather than with sacred and transcendental themes. . There was a great revival of interest in the Greek and Roman classics and in ancient institutions. One striking feature of the periodization of history was that Christianity became relegated to the dark age, and the classical age of Greek and Roman cultures was viewed as a period of great achievement for humanity (Hallowell and Porter, 1997:225-26).

Although most of the humanists regarded themselves as Christians, they rejected the otherworldliness of the middle ages. Humanists saw themselves and their world from the viewpoints of the Greeks and Romans. Moreover, the great painters, sculptors, and architects looked back to classical art. For example, architects changed their style of building from the soaring Gothic to adaptation of the ancient Roman temple, emphasizing symmetry and the horizontal line. Throughout the Middle Ages the human body had remained concealed in paintings and treated as an object of shame. The rediscovery of the ancient pagan worlds of Athens and Rome led to the celebration of the human body as a thing of beauty.

**b. Secularism**

The second fundamental element of the spirit of the Renaissance is secularism. Secularism took many forms. It can readly be seen in the art of the period. Recognizable human beings and natural objects are evident. Even when the theme was religious, the glories of nature and humanity were apparent. Michelangelo painted Jehovah as a well-muscled superman. Close attention was paid to perspective and to anatomy. The beauties of this world were celebrated.

On the other hand, philosophers in this period, emphasized the use of reason as a natural faculty. They and popular writers and teachers also emphasized other natural faculties-including the physical ones. Many humanists came to the conclusion that ancient learning before the Dark Age provided a deeper and truer knowledge of reality, humanity, and society than that found in contemporary theology.

However, for humanists, secularism could exist side by side with sincere Christianity. Interests in the world no longer regarded as an obstacle to entrance into the other world. The popes patronized the artists and appreciated their work.

**c. Individualism**

The third element in the Renaissance spirit was individualism. Individualism took the form of recognizing the talents and virtues of particular men. In large part humanism was revival of the thought of the pre-Socratic Protagoras who taught that “Man is the measure of all things” Humans stand at the centre of the world. The skill that had previously been directed to building catedrals proclaiming the glory of God was now directed to the praises of humanity.

Ambition was praised as a virtue. Individuals demanded and received public recognition for their achievements. The art and the literature of the day glorified individuals and the creators themselves were glorified. For example, the painters rediscovered perspective and used it to place humans in harmony with their natural environment. The supernatural was gradually reciding from view. This world and all that is within seemed more than enough to satisfy human desires. Humanness was becoming more prominent and individualistic.

However, men were not amoral during the Renaissance, but there was greater opportunity for the expression of individual will and enterprise and a greater acceptance of personal ambition. Individuals sought success in business, politics, war, art, and private lives. The measure of a man’s worth was likely to be the scope of his success rather than the methods by which he had won it. Consequently, the classics provided inspiration; secularism indicated the nature of the values recognized; and individualism was the manner in which the new values were sought for and celebrated.

**Machiavelli**

For both Plato and Aristotle, humans are naturally political-social animals through the requirements of biology and of reason and speech. Society is viewed as an expression of a potentially rational and ordered human nature.

However, for Machiavelli, conflict and force, and fear and necessity explain our political beginnings. Likewise, morality develops from the necessities of political order, not from God’s commands or from the structure of human nature.

Politics is about the power. Machiavelli emphasizes the importance of human power and ability in forming political institutions. Moreover, law is not a derivation from reason or human nature but a human tool and creation. Since this is the case, laws can be used as a necessity in forming a citizenry. This, he believes, was the great achievement of the founders of Rome. Machiavelli holds that a founder must concentrate power in his hands in order to be effective and that, to this end, it may prove necessary to resort to force.

Machiavelli separated ethics of politics and asserted that politics has nothing to do with morality. Ends justify means. Ends include gaining and retaining political power.

**Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755)**

Montesquieu declared in his great work *Spirit of the Laws* (1748) that he is interested only in English constitutional law and not in its practical application. However his objective went far beyond that of revealing the basis of the English constitution.

He set out to explain the development of the entire institutional framework of government and thereby to expound the social laws of political development. He in short sought to establish a rational science of government

We can talk about his two contribution best known in the history of political thought.

1.His belief in social and historical conditions in the development of laws or political institutions.

Montesquieu demonstrated that any understanding of laws and constitutional practices had to be rooted in the general state of society. He emphasized climatic conditions.

2.Montesquieu formalized doctrine of the separation of powers. The doctrine itself originates in the ancient idea of the 'mixed constitution' elaborated by Polybius and Cicero. But it was Montesquieu who stated doctrine in its commonsensical form. For him political power is always apt to be abused. So to prevent this abuse it is necessary that power should be checked and balanced. Montesquieu believed that the prevailing English system of government approached to his ideal rather than the government of other European states.

He to some extend misread the English political system and emphasized the need to resist tyranny by fragmenting government power through the device of the separation of powers. The separation of powers proposes that government be divided into 3 branches as legislature/ the executive and the judiciary.

The separation of powers for him permit liberty to flourish. In his view 'liberty is the right to do everything the laws permit'. Freedom is achieved through the operation of political and legal arrangements which protect citizens against the oppresive instincts of their rulers.

Forms of Government

Montesquieu distinguishes between 3 kinds of government as republic/monarchy/tyranny

Republic is a form of government between democracy and aristocracy.

Monarchy here is different from absolute monarchy but a kind of constitutional monarchy.

Tyranny is an arbitrary rule by the king.

These kinds of government are based upon different principles

Republic is based upon the principle of the citizens` political virtue.

Monarchy is grounded on the principle of warriors` sense of honour.

Tyranny is based upon the citizens` fears.

Sources: R.N. Berki, The *History of Political Thought*, (London:J.M. Dent & Sons, 1988); Gerald Runkle, *A History of Western Political Theory*, (New York: The Ronald Press, 1968).