



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE: IRD271**

**2 CREDIT UNITS**

**COURSE TITLE: POLITICAL THOUGHT: PLATO-MACHIAVELLI**

**IRD271**

**POLITICAL THOUGHT: PLATO-MACCHIARELLI**

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

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### **IRD 271: Political Thought: Plato-Machiavelli (2 Credit Units)**

This is a general survey of Classical and Medieval thoughts up to the fifteenth century with a focus on individual thinkers; pre-occupations of political thought; the language and methods of political analysis.

**CONTENTS**

**PAGE**

Introduction .....  
Course Aim and Objectives .....  
Working through the Course .....  
Course Materials .....  
Study Units .....  
Textbooks and References .....  
Assessment Exercises .....  
Final Examination and Grading .....  
Course Marking Scheme .....  
Course Overview/Presentation .....  
What you will Need in this Course .....  
Tutors' Tutorials .....  
Assessment Exercises.....  
How to Get the Most from This Course .....  
Conclusion .....  
Summary .....

## **INTRODUCTION**

IRD 271 – Political Thought: Plato-Machiavelli is a one semester course designed for Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) International Relations and Diplomacy students. It is a two-unit credit course designed to enable you have a deep view of the salient issues in Political Thought, particularly between the era Plato and Machiavelli. The course begins with a brief introductory module, which will help you to have a good understanding of the issues at stake in the study of political thought. Such issues include; a general survey of Classical and Medieval thoughts up to the fifteenth century with a focus on individual thinkers; pre-occupations of political thought; the language and methods of political analysis.

## **COURSE AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The primary aim of this course is to provide B.Sc. students of International Relations and Diplomacy with a comprehensive knowledge of different early Political Thoughts. However, the course's specific objectives include enabling you to:

- i. have a working knowledge of political thoughts by understanding the dynamics of politics before Plato;
- ii. understand the perspectives in political thoughts from Plato to Machiavelli;
- iii. analyse the pre-occupations of the political thought within the classical and medieval periods;
- iv. appraise the language and methods of political analysis within the classical and medieval era;

The specific study outcomes of each study unit can be found at the beginning and you can make references to it while studying. It is necessary and helpful for you to check at the end of the unit, if your progress is consistent with the stated study outcomes and if you can conveniently answer the self-assessment exercises. The overall objectives of the course will be achieved, if you diligently study and complete all the units in this course.

## **WORKING THROUGH THE COURSE**

To complete the course, you are required to read the study units and other related materials. You will also need to undertake practical exercises for which you need a pen, a note-book and other materials that will be listed in this guide. The exercises are to aid you in understanding the concepts being presented. At the end of each unit, you will be required to submit written assignment for assessment purposes.

At the end of the course, you will be expected to write a final examination.

## **THE COURSE MATERIAL**

In this course, as in all other courses, the major components you will find are as follows:

1. Course Guide

2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignments

## STUDY UNITS

There are 16 study units in this course. They are:

<b>Module 1</b>	<b>Notion and Evolution of Political Thought</b>
Unit 1	Notion of Political Thought
Unit 2	Evolution of Political Thought
Unit 3	Political Thought before Plato
Unit 4	Features of Greek Thought
<b>Module 2</b>	<b>Classical Era and the Theory of the City State</b>
Unit 1	Plato and the Ideal State
Unit 2	Aristotle and the Theory of the State
Unit 3	Decline of City States
Unit 4	Marcus Tullius Cicero
<b>Module 3</b>	<b>The State and the Church</b>
Unit 1	Seneca and the Christian Fathers
Unit 2	St. Augustine
Unit 3	St. Thomas Aquinas
Unit 4	Marsiglio of Padua
<b>Module 4</b>	<b>State and Statecraft</b>
Unit 1	Niccolo Machiavelli's Early Life and Influences on Him
Unit 2	Method of Machiavelli
Unit 3	Machiavelli as a Modern Thinker
Unit 4	Political Ideas of Machiavelli

As you can observe, the course begins with the basics and expands into a more elaborate, complex and detailed form. All you need to do is to follow the instructions as provided in each unit. In addition, some self-assessment exercises have been provided with which you can test your progress with the text and determine if your study is fulfilling the stated objectives. Tutor-marked assignments have also been provided to aid your study. All of these will assist you to be able to fully grasp knowledge of political thoughts: Plato – Machiavelli.

## TEXTBOOKS AND REFERENCES

At the end of each unit, you will find a list of relevant reference materials which you may yourself wish to consult as the need arises, even though I have made efforts to provide you with the most important information you need to pass this course. However, I would encourage you, as a second-year student to cultivate the habit of consulting as many relevant materials as you are able to within the time available to you. In particular, be

sure to consult whatever material you are advised to consult before attempting any exercise.

### **ASSESSMENT**

The Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs) are provided at the end of each unit. Your answers to the SAEs are not meant to be submitted, but they are also important since they give you an opportunity to assess your own understanding of the course content. Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs) are to be carefully answered and kept in your assignment file for submission and marking. This will count for 30% of your total score in the course.

The self-assessment exercises should help you to evaluate your understanding of the material so far. These are not to be submitted. You will find all answers to these within the units they are intended for.

### **FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING**

There will be a final examination at the end of the course. The examination carries a total of 70 % (per cent) of the total course grade. The examination will reflect the contents of what you have learnt and the self-assessments and tutor-marked assignments. You therefore need to revise your course materials beforehand.

### **COURSE MARKING SCHEME**

The following table sets out how the actual course marking is broken down.

<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>MARKS</b>
Four assignments (the best four of all the assignments submitted for marking)	Four assignments, each marked out of 10%, but highest scoring three selected, thus totaling 30%
Final Examination	70% of overall course score
<b>Total</b>	<b>100% of course score</b>

### **COURSE OVERVIEW PRESENTATION SCHEME**

<b>Units</b>	<b>Title of Work</b>	<b>Week Activity</b>	<b>Assignment (End-of-Unit)</b>
<b>Course Guide</b>	<b>History of Political Thought: Plato – Machiavelli</b>		
<b>Module 1</b>	<b>Notion and Evolution of Political Thought</b>		
Unit 1	Notion of Political Thought	Week 1	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Evolution of Political Thought	Week 2	Assignment 1
Unit 3	Political Thought before Plato	Week 3	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Features of Greek Thought	Week 4	Assignment 1
<b>Module 2</b>	<b>Classical Era and the Theory of the City State</b>		
Unit 1	Plato and the Ideal State	Week 5	Assignment 1



Unit 2	Aristotle and the Theory of the State	Week 6	Assignment 1
Unit 3	Decline of City State	Week 7	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Marcus Tullius Cicero	Week 8	Assignment 1
<b>Module 3</b>	<b>The State and the Church</b>		
Unit 1	Seneca and the Christian Fathers	Week 9	Assignment 1
Unit 2	St. Augustine	Week 10	Assignment 1
Unit 3	St. Thomas Aquinas	Week 11	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Marsiglio of Padua	Week 12	Assignment 1
<b>Module 4</b>	<b>State and Statecraft</b>		
Unit 1	Niccolo Machiavelli's Early Life and Influences on Him	Week 13	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Method of Machiavelli	Week 14	Assignment 1
Unit 3	Machiavelli as a Modern Thinker	Week 15	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Political Ideas of Machiavelli	Week 16	Assignment 1

### **WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR THE COURSE**

This course builds on what you have learnt at 100 Level. It will be helpful if you try to review what you studied earlier. Second, you may need to purchase one or two texts recommended as important for your mastery of the course content. You need quality time in a study friendly environment every week. If you are computer-literate (which ideally you should be), you should be prepared to visit recommended websites. You should also cultivate the habit of visiting reputable physical libraries accessible to you.

### **TUTORS AND TUTORIALS**

There are 15 hours of tutorials provided in support of the course. You will be notified of the dates and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, and keep a close watch on your progress. Be sure to send in your tutor marked assignments promptly, and feel free to contact your tutor in case of any difficulty with your self-assessment exercise, tutor-marked assignment or the grading of an assignment. In any case, you are advised to attend the tutorials regularly and punctually. Always take a list of such prepared questions to the tutorials and participate actively in the discussions.

### **ASSESSMENT EXERCISES**

There are two aspects to the assessment of this course. First is the Tutor-Marked Assignments; second is a written examination. In handling these assignments, you are expected to apply the information, knowledge and experience acquired during the course. The tutor-marked assignments are now being done online. Ensure that you register all your courses so that you can have easy access to the online assignments. Your score in the online assignments will account for 30 per cent of your total

coursework. At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final examination. This examination will account for the other 70 per cent of your total course mark.

### **TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS (TMAs)**

Usually, there are four online tutor-marked assignments in this course. Each assignment will be marked over ten percent. The best three (that is the highest three of the 10 marks) will be counted. This implies that the total mark for the best three assignments will constitute 30% of your total course work. You will be able to complete your online assignments successfully from the information and materials contained in your references, reading and study units.

### **FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING**

The final examination for IRD271: Political Thought: Plato - Machiavelli will be of two hours duration and have a value of 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of multiple choice and fill-in-the-gaps questions which will reflect the practice exercises and tutor-marked assignments you have previously encountered. All areas of the course will be assessed. It is important that you use adequate time to revise the entire course. You may find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments before the examination. The final examination covers information from all aspects of the course.

### **HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE**

1. There are 16 units in this course. You are to spend one week in each unit. In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecture. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to the lecturer. In the same way a lecturer might give you some reading to do. The study units tell you when to read and which are your text materials or recommended books. You are provided exercises to do at appropriate points, just as a lecturer might give you in a class exercise.
2. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit, and how a particular unit is integrated with other units and the course as a whole. Next to this is a set of learning outcomes. These outcomes let you know what you should be able to do, by the time you have completed the unit. These learning outcomes are meant to guide your study. The moment a unit is finished, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the outcomes. If this is made a habit, then you will significantly improve your chance of passing the course.
3. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your reference or from a reading section.

4. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor or visit the study centre nearest to you. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.
5. Read this course guide thoroughly. It is your first assignment.
6. Organise a study schedule – Design a 'Course Overview' to guide you through the course. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units.
7. Important information; e.g. details of your tutorials and the date of the first day of the semester is available at the study centre.
8. You need to gather all the information into one place, such as your diary or a wall calendar. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates and schedule of work for each unit.
9. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything to stay faithful to it.
10. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind in their coursework. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor or course coordinator know before it is too late for help.
11. Turn to Unit 1, and read the introduction and the study outcomes for the unit.
12. Assemble the study materials. You will need your references for the unit you are studying at any point in time.
13. As you work through the unit, you will know what sources to consult for further information.
14. Visit your study centre whenever you need up-to-date information.
15. Well before the relevant online TMA due dates, visit your study centre for relevant information and updates. Keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignment carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and, therefore, will help you pass the examination.
16. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your tutor. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's

objectives, you can start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to space your study so that you can keep yourself on schedule.

17. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the course guide).

## CONCLUSION

This is a historical course but you will get the best out of it if you cultivate the habit of relating it to political issues in the contemporary political environment.

## SUMMARY

Political Thought: Plato - Machiavelli introduces you to the general understanding of the fundamentals of Political Thought. It is designed to enable you have a comprehensive understanding of the various political thinkers and their views from Plato to Machiavelli. All the basic course materials that you need to successfully complete the course are provided. At the end, you will be able to:

- have a working knowledge of political thought by understanding the dynamics of politics before Plato;
- understand the perspectives in political thought from Plato to Machiavelli;
- analyse the pre-occupations of the political thought within the classical and medieval periods;
- appraise the language and methods of political analysis within the classical and medieval era;

### Table of Contents

<b>Module 1</b>	<b>Notion and Evolution of Political Thought</b>
Unit 1	Notion of Political Thought
Unit 2	Evolution of Political Thought
Unit 3	Political Thought before Plato
Unit 4	Features of Greek Thought
<b>Module 2</b>	<b>Classical Era and the Theory of the City State</b>
Unit 1	Plato and the Ideal State
Unit 2	Aristotle and the Theory of the State
Unit 3	Decline of City States
Unit 4	Marcus Tullius Cicero
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Unit 3	St. Thomas Aquinas
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**Module 4**

Unit 1

Unit 2

Unit 3

Unit 4

**State and Statecraft**

Niccolo Machiavelli's Early Life and Influences on Him

Method of Machiavelli

Machiavelli as a Modern Thinker

Political Ideas of Machiavelli

# Module 1      Notion and Evolution of Political Thought

Unit 1	Notion of Political Thought
Unit 2	Evolution of Political Thought
Unit 3	Political Thoughts before Plato
Unit 4	Features of Greek Thought

## Unit 1:      Notion of Political Thought

### Unit Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Meaning of Political Thought
- 1.4 The Significance of Political Thought
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.7 Possible Answers to Self Assessment Exercises



### 1.1 Introduction

Political thought occupies a centre-stage in the modern discussion of politics, diplomacy, economics, philosophy, logic, among others. A good grasp of the subject of political thought is germane to the comprehension of modern society. Most of the modern topics on political analysis, governance and economy are traceable to the ideas presented by these political theorists. So, an understanding of the dynamics of political thought particularly the classical and medieval eras is essential for the overall appreciation of contemporary socio- political phenomena. The views of scholars of political thought's different perspectives shall be presented in this unit.



### 1.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define political thought from different perspectives;
- Identify the significance of the study of political thought; and
- Apply the knowledge of the understanding of political thought to solving practical socio-political problem.



### 1.3 Meaning of Political Thought

Political thought is a critical aspect of the social sciences. Its dynamism emanates from the growing importance attached to the field of study and its relevance in the understanding of human society. Political thought is not different from any other concept in the social sciences that is not amenable to any single and universally acceptable definition.

Political thought is the study of questions concerning power, justice, rights, law, and other issues pertaining to governance. Whereas political science assumes that these concepts are what they are, political thought asks how they have come about and to what effect. Just as Socrates' simple question 'How should we be governed?' led to his execution, the question 'What makes a government legitimate?' leads to political turmoil when posed at critical times.

Political Thought is about the State, its structure, nature and purpose. It is nothing but "the moral phenomena of human behaviour in Society". It follows not much explanation of the occurrence of state as a justification of its continuation. The questions which Political Thought is forever stressed to answer;

- i) What is in the State? And why should I obey it?
- ii) What are the proper limits of authority and when may I refuse to obey it?
- iii) How is the authority of state with which I cannot give out to be made well-suited with the liberty without which I am less than a man?

Also, political thought asks what form government should take place and why; what duties citizens owe to a legitimate government, if any; and when it may be legitimately overthrown, if ever. Generally speaking, political thoughts, political philosophy, and political theory are terms often used interchangeably to mean the study of philosophical texts related to politics (Bochenski, 1972).

For instance, whereas a political scientist may examine the democratic processes at work within a particular system, a political philosopher will be interested in clarifying what is meant by 'democracy'. Political thoughts, therefore, addresses itself to two main tasks. First, it is concerned with the critical evaluation of political beliefs, paying attention to both inductive and deductive forms of reasoning.

Secondly, it attempts to clarify and refine the concepts employed in political discourse. What this means is that, despite the best efforts of political philosophers to remain impartial and objective, they are inevitably concerned with justifying certain political viewpoints at the expense of others and with upholding a particular understanding of a concept rather than alternative ones (Charles, 1979).

Furthermore, political thought has been described as man's attempt to consciously understand and solve the problems of his group life and organisation. Sabine and Thorson (1973: 3) described it as an intellectual tradition whose history consists of the evolution of men's thoughts about political problems over time. It is the disciplined investigation of political problems which has over the centuries attracted inquiries from political philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, St Augustine, Machiavelli, Karl Marx and many others.

Consequently, the focus of any study on the history of political thought is to understand and interpret the various perspectives on the collection of writings on the changing theories of the state. Such an inquiry will explore the reason of the state, the nature of

the state and the place of the individuals within the framework of the state. It seeks to establish yardsticks upon which the state and its machinery can be objectively assessed.

The thrust of political thought has often raised questions on the limits of state power, the relationship between the church and the state, the so-called political obligation and polemics on the contract and relationship between the citizens and the state. In line with this, philosophers in time and space have often sought to explore not only the objective realities of a political system but also what should constitute the ideal reality.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *Which of the following is not a preoccupation of Political Thought?*
  - A. *The structure of the state*
  - B. *The nature of the state*
  - C. *The climatic condition of the state*
  - D. *The purpose of the state*
2. *Man's attempt to consciously understand and solve the problems of his group life and organisation is called\_\_\_\_*
  - A. *History*
  - B. *Political Science*
  - C. *Sociology*
  - D. *Political thought*

### **1.4 Significance of Political Thought**

Human beings are unique in two respects: they possess reason and the ability to reflect on their actions. They also have the capacity to use language and communicate with each other. Unlike other species, they can express their innermost thoughts and desires; they can share their ideas and discuss what they consider to be good and desirable. Political thought has its roots in these twin aspects of the human self. Systematic reflection on politics, the nature and purpose of government and political institutions, involving both to understand them and if necessary, how to change them, is quite old. Political activity is an activity concerned with the management of man's collective life through the state (Hoffman & Grahman, 2009).

From classical period onwards, political speculation has been about how fundamental political activity is, how it provides the groundwork for human civilization which distinguishes man from all other living creatures and to inquire into the basic problem of 'how to live together' in a community because living together is necessitated by human nature and forms the core of individual life.

Political thought seeks to understand, explain and analyze the political phenomena and prescribe ways and means to rectify the shortcomings. Political thought looks at certain



basic areas such as; the way the society should be organised, the reason for the existence of government, and the best form of government, the law that limits our freedom, the responsibility of the state to its citizens, citizens' responsibility to one another, among others. It systematically thinks about the values that inform political life, values such as freedom, equality and justice. It explains the meanings and significance of these and other related concepts. It clarifies the existing definitions of these concepts by focusing on some major political thinkers of the past and present.

It also examines the extent to which freedom or equality are actually present in the institutions that we participate in every day such as schools, shops, buses or trains or government offices. At an advanced level, it looks at whether existing definitions are adequate and how existing institutions and policy practices must be modified to become more democratic. The objective of political theory is to train citizens to think rationally about political questions and assess correctly the political events of our time (Das, 2006).

Political theory is a complex subject. This is because, in the Western tradition, it is at least as old as the times of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and others and has been attended to by philosophers, theologians, kings, economists, sociologists and others. The number of political theorists is very large, and the interests and commitments of those engaged in this field have been so different that we are faced with the difficult task of answering a simple question, moreover, because of the diversity and changes in the socio-economic circumstances, there have been substantial changes both in the subject matter of political theory and the methods of studying it.

Political theory is divided into distinct streams such as classical, modern, empirical etc. While the classical political theory was dominated by philosophy and dealt with the description, explanation, prescription and evaluation of the political phenomena; empirical political theory claimed to be a science and has been primarily concerned with the description and explanation of the political reality. Of late, contemporary political theory has tried to blend the theoretical and practical aspects (Mukherejee & Ramaswamy, 2011).

Political science and political philosopher play complementary roles in the realm of political theory, therefore, the significance of political theory may be sought in both of these areas and these include; control of social life, social criticism and reconstruction and the clarification of concepts.

**Control of Social Life:** The scientific analysis of political life enables us to understand and solve the problems of our social lives. Just as the knowledge of geology, helps us to understand the causes of the earthquake and gives us insight for preventing the havoc caused by it, so political science enables us to understand the causes of conflicts and violence in society and gives us insight for preventing their outburst.

**Social Criticisms and Reconstruction:** Political philosophy is primarily concerned with right and wrong, good and evil in social life. Political theory, therefore, gives us ample insight into the possible ills of social life and their remedies.

**Clarification of Concepts:** It helps us a lot in the clarification of the concept used in the analysis of social and political life which is essential for the development of knowledge.

**Formal Model Building:** Political theory helps in devising formal models of political processes similar to the ones in theoretical economies. These models are explanatory in nature which offers systematically the factors on which political processes are based and they are also normative because they try to show the consequences that will accrue from following a certain rule (Varma, 2006).

**Encourages Mutual Respect and Tolerance:** The tradition of political theory encourages a dignified debate between scholars. When we follow the tradition of these political philosophers, it inspires us to understand each other's viewpoint, allows us to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our thoughts, and helps us to resolve our differences peacefully (Sabine & Thorson, 1973).

**It makes Man to Understand his Environment:** 'Man is a rational creature, and has shown affinity to understand himself and institutions around him; he has started studying the physics, biological and social environments and indulged theories about them. These speculations like state, its nature, purpose, functions, organization etc., have occupied important position. This speculation about the different problems connected with the state is generally designated as political though it can be said that the study of political thought is as old as the state itself.'

Political philosophy scholars opined that political thought is not related with the problems of the state government but also includes study of the nature of man and his relations with the universe. According to Doyle (1949), the important aspects that are included in the study of political thought include;

- 1) The Nature and Functions of Man,
- 2) His Relation to the rest of Universe which involves a consideration of the meaning of life as a whole; emerging from the interaction of these two problems of relation of man to his fellowmen.

The latter's main concern of political theory in the narrowest sense and involves a discussion on the nature, purpose and function of the state.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *The objective of political theory is to train \_\_\_ to think rationally about political questions and assess correctly the political events of our time.*
  - A. *The Political Class*
  - B. *The Electorates*
  - C. *The Philosophers*

- D. *The Citizens*
2. *The scientific analysis of political life enables us to understand and solve the problems of our \_\_\_\_ lives.*
- A. *Social*  
 B. *Marital*  
 C. *Religious*  
 D. *Emotional*
3. *It can be said that the study of political thought is as old as the \_\_\_\_ itself.*
- A. *Education*  
 B. *Government*  
 C. *Society*  
 D. *State*



### 1.5 Summary

Political thought furnishes us with the knowledge of the nature, evolution, and dynamics of the socio-political development of the human society. It is concerned with the nature and attributes of the state, the power of the state, the source of state's power, the limit of state's power, the condition under which the citizens can legally disobey the state, among others. The careful study of political thought presents us with an opportunity to properly comprehend the dynamics of governance in the modern era. The various perspectives on political thought and its relevance were presented in this unit.



### 1.6 References/Further Readings

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## 1.7 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

### Answer to SAEs 1

1. *C*
2. *D*

### Answer to SAEs 2

1. *D*
2. *A*
3. *D*

## Unit 2: Evolution of Political Thought

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 The Evolution of Political Thought
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises



### 2.1 Introduction

Political thought underwent a historical development to be able to arrive at its current state. Though it could be traced to the era of Socrates, its study is as old as the state. The evolution of political thought can be traced to the ancient Greece. The Greek city – states of Athens and Sparta occupy a critical position in the discussion of political thought. This unit undertakes a brief evolutionary review of political thought.



### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the historical development of political thought
- Analyse the various phases of the evolution of political thought
- Evaluate the pre-occupation of political thought.



### 2.3 Evolution of Political Thought

The history of political thought dates back to antiquity while the history of the world and thus the history of political thinking by humans stretch up through the European Medieval period and the Renaissance. In the Age of Enlightenment, political entities expanded from basic systems of self-governance and monarchy to the complex democratic and communist systems that exist of the Industrialized and the Modern Era. In parallel, political systems have expanded from vaguely defined frontier-type boundaries, to the definite boundaries existing today (Accessed Online at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_political\\_thought](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_political_thought), 28/09/2022).

Some of the scholars consider the origin of political thought to the ancient Greek. Barker (1906) says political thought begins with Greek. Its origin connected with calm and clear rationalism of the Greek mind. This perception of Barker is predicated on the fact that

the Greek political thought is one of the most ancient thoughts which were preserved and passed on to next generations in the form of one treatise or other. It has now been recognized that political philosophy is not the exclusive domain of ancient Greeks, but certain countries like India, Babylonia, Egypt etc. also produced political philosophers which are as old as ancient Greek philosophy. They have also made unsettled works of Greeks.

However, the history of western political philosophy begins with ancient Greece. Greek politics was characterized by the existence of city-states or *polis*. Aristotle and Plato wrote of the polis as an ideal form of association or organised society of men dwelling in walled towns (the heart and home of political society) in which the whole community's intellectual, religious, cultural, political and economic needs could be satisfied. The *polis*, characterised primarily by its self-sufficiency, was seen by Aristotle as the means of developing morality in the human character. It is significant to observe here that the Greek *polis* corresponds appropriately to the modern concept of nation, a population of a fixed area that shares a common language, history and culture.

In the classical era, man was conceived as a fraction of the *polis* or self-governing city-state that had no other existence outside the framework of the *polis*. The city-state was on its part conceived as the only genuine platform through which political values could be realised. The *polis* was conceived as fundamentally self-sufficient and the only ethically sound foundation for the higher forms of civilisation. It was however not a perfect structure but one which needed to be either improved or superseded. There was no premium attached to the notion of individualism. Specifically, a good life was perceived only in terms of participation in the life or activities of the polis. It is in line with this that Plato described the state as the bottom of the division of labour in which men of differing capacity satisfy their needs by mutual exchange.

Participation in the affairs of the *polis* was ethically conceived as more important than either duties or rights. As Aristotle put it, happiness is activity and he who does nothing cannot do well. The city-state or polis, in which political activities revolved, was of necessity small and further characterized by the love for independence and the all-inclusiveness of its activities. Aristotle observed that the *polis* was self-sufficing as being not too large as to prevent the unity of interests and feelings among its members. Furthermore, he maintains that the citizens of the polis must be capable of ruling and being ruled. Thus, the evolution of democratic thoughts was evident in the Greek city-states.

Within the *polis*, citizenship was perceived in terms of sharing of the common life and stands at the summit of human goods. Consequently, to advocate or assert that for an individual to seek for a good life outside the frontiers of the polis, or to be in it and not be of it was not only alien but also perceived as a sacrilege. This explains why Aristotle strongly asserts that the man who can live outside the polis is either a beast or a god.

In these presumptions lies the genius of ethics and politics of the polis in the classical era. It is significant to note that this concept of the nature of the state is fundamentally

faulty. For one, the complete acceptance of the polis as a moral institution by its advocates reveals the limits of their political horizon. Little premium is attached to the role which foreign affairs play in the economy of the polis. During the centuries that followed the collapse of Rome, the political organisation of the Western world was extremely pluralistic.

Theoretically, the medieval political system was based on the idea that the Pope and Emperor, as Vicars of Christ were jointly responsible for the governance of Christendom. Under this condition, no territorial Prince had the power or authority to maintain an effective rule of law since the secular realm was broken down into a complex network of overlapping jurisdictions. Writing in this epoch, St Aurelius Augustine (354-438 AD) the political existentialist, makes a distinction between a universal order of justice and the order of the state. For him, men as individuals should ultimately honour the universal society than the state.

In his contribution to political ideas of this era, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) supports the church supremacy over the state. He argued that since the true end of man is to attain virtue, and through that qualify for the eternal enjoyment of God, the organization through which this is attained must be superior. Consequently, he advocated that the secular government should be subordinate to the church because the latter is concerned with an ultimate purpose that is the salvation of souls.

In the centuries between St. Augustine and St. Aquinas, feudalism emerged as the dominant socio-economic and political characteristic of the Middle-Ages. The feudal era, which lasted for about ten centuries, is a socio-economic system of land ownership wherein the lords, leased out the land (manor) to serfs who owe loyalty to the lords. They work on the land and must return a good portion of the produce to the lord.

Under the feudal system, man's socio-economic and political relevance was dependent on his relationship to the land. It is these features that characterized the trend in the Middle-Ages. Attempts are made below to highlight the dominant philosophies of the epoch. Practical exigencies of the state reached a point in the emergence of Reformation and Renaissance. The arrival of Protestantism raised serious questions of political obligation in the evolution of political thought. Practising Lutherans and The Calvinist began to rethink their continued loyalty to Catholic Princes and even Catholic subjects thought the same way about Protestant Princes. The consequence of this was the crystallization and codification of natural laws and doctrines of state sovereignty. Here, royal authority increased with a decline of papal authority even in Catholic states.

The end product was the emergence of absolute monarchy which overturned feudal constitutionalism on which the medieval politics depended. The reformation supported the absolutism of Monarchs and placed all ecclesiastical authority to civil predominance. Reformation scholars such as Hobbes supported absolutism in his Leviathan, which contained his social contract theory. Hobbes doctrine found a complement in the divine right of kings, which gave credence to royal absolutism.

Machiavelli on his part freed kings from the limitation imposed by public morality. He argues that the state is an end in itself, with its own life aimed at its own preservation and advantage and as such was not bound by obligations. For him, the prince should aim at conquering and maintaining state and the end will be judged honourably and praised by everyone. It was from the writings of Nicollo Machiavelli and Jean Bodin that the modern concept of state as the centralising force for stability emerged. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli gave prime import to the durability of government, sweeping aside all moral consideration and focusing instead on the strength, the vitality, courage and independence of the ruler. For Bodin, power was not sufficient in itself to create a sovereign. Rules must comply with morality to be durable, and it must have continuity i.e. a means or establishing succession. Reflecting on the role of state sovereignty in the prevention of anarchy, Bodin cautions that for monarchical power to remain unquestioned it must be in conformity with natural laws and to reflect divine authorisation.

The era of reformation and renaissance was succeeded by the era of reason and enlightenment. This era was characterised by intense scepticism of religious revelations, the increasing spread of literacy and consequential growth in the size of politically conscious, curious and ambitious communities. Specifically, the intense challenge was placed on all established dogma and this ignited a changing condition of political and social speculations, the proliferation of political thoughts and conflicts of rival explanation or models of social and individual life within the state.

Descartes, Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau who contributed to French encyclopaedia believed in the power of reason and knowledge to liberate man from restrictive political and religious systems. The influence of English empiricist on the philosophical traditions stemming from Descartes led to the great intellectual development referred to as Enlightenment. Montesquieu writing on liberty emphasized that political freedom is to be found in moderate governments where power is not abused. He argued that when the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body, there can be no liberty and if the judicial power is not separated from the legislative and executive, the life and liberty of subjects would be exposed to arbitrary control.

Consequently, he proposed that the nature of governmental constitution should be such that power is a check to power. A significant feature and prevailing belief of the Enlightenment is the Principle of liberty as contained in Code Napoleon which emphasized that the state should not encroach on an individual's freedom. This code was exported from France to Europe and the rest of the world. Utopian thinkers looked forward to the emergence of politics not characterised by inequalities and injustice.

Jeremy Bentham in his work, *A Fragment of Government* (1776) and *Principle* (1789) advocated for utilitarianism, which emphasized that the happiness of the majority of individuals was the greatest good. This he argues will be achieved through the calculus of pleasure and pain. Rousseau extends the dominant notion of the era by advocating that the state should owe its authority to the general will of the governed because the



law is none other than the will of the people as a whole and an environment for the moral development of humanity. This era featured two prominent revolutions one in France (1789) and the other in the USA (1776).

However, the Greeks have an edge over other philosophers from India, Africa, among others, as the Greeks could preserve their national heritage and passion to the next generations, while other countries failed to do so. According to Maxey (1938), the closer and fuller acquaintance with the civilization of remote millennium, which we now enjoy reveals an astonishing abundance of the political ideas among the people of those vanished areas and shows how both in thought and practice they anticipated parallel and to some extent laid the foundations for ideas which subsequently appeared in European political consciousness. It was in those ancient political systems that the human mind first comes to grips with the problems of government and first attempted to formulate ideas to account for the phenomena of politics and to structure the exercise of political authority.

### Self-Assessment Exercises 1

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

- 1. The origin of political thought is traced to ancient \_\_\_\_\_*
  - A. Greek*
  - B. Macedonia*
  - C. Babylonian empire*
  - D. Egypt*
- 2. The \_\_\_ was conceived as fundamentally self-sufficient and the only ethically sound foundation for the higher forms of civilisation.*
  - A. Politics*
  - B. Polis*
  - C. Government*
  - D. Law*
- 3. St. \_\_\_\_\_ supports the church supremacy over the state.*
  - A. Augustine*
  - B. Humphrey Assisi*
  - C. Paul of Tarsus*
  - D. Thomas Aquinas*



### 2.4 Summary

In this unit, effort has been made to trace the historical development of political thought. It was submitted that political thought is as old as human history. The initial conception of political thought could be traced to the views of the Greek political philosophers. These views, which have been transmitted from generation to generation, have continued to shape the various aspects of the socio-political life of people across various centuries up to the present era. Political philosophers have emerged from other areas of the world such as India, Africa, among others.



### **2.5 References/Further Readings**

- Barker, E. (1906). *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*. Methuen: G. P. Putnam's Sons
- Maxey, C. C. (1938). *Political Philosophies*. New York: Macmillan Company.
- Sabine, G.H. & Thorson, T.L. (1973). *A History of Political Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. PVT LTD.
- Varma, S.P. (2006). *Modern Political Theory*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House PVT LTD.



### **2.6 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)**

#### **Answer to SAEs 1**

1. A
2. B
3. D

## Unit 3: Political Thoughts before Plato

### Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 The Political Thoughts before Plato
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Reading
- 3.6 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



### 3.1 Introduction

In this unit, the student is exposed to the political thoughts that existed before Plato emerged on the intellectual scene. It is important to look at those theories as they will set the stage for the proper analysis of the thoughts of Plato and the succeeding political theorists. The examination of those thoughts is also important as they will help to examine their influence on Plato's political thought.



### 3.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the philosophers that existed before Plato
- Analyse the opinions presented by those philosophers
- Apply those opinions to contemporary reality



### 3.3 The Political Thoughts before Plato

The pronounced age during the third quarter of fifth century B.C. was the great age of an Athenian public life. It was the inordinate age of political philosophy, which came only after the downfall of 'Athens in her struggle with Sparta. As in several cases in history, replication followed accomplishment and principles were conceptually stated only after they had long been denoted. During this age, not much was given either to the reading or writing of books and even if political treatises were written before the time of Plato, they were not well-preserved.

Sabine and Thorson (1973) observed that while the Great Age of Athenian public life fell in the third quarter of the fifth century, the Great Age of political philosophy came only after the downfall of Athens in her struggle with Sparta. Prior to this era, the Athenians were not much engaged in either reading or writing. As such, scarcely anything was preserved on prevailing political theories. There however exist indications that during the fifth century, active political debates on issues of public concerns and the conduct of government were common place. Political questions of various dimensions were

actively asked and discussed and the Greek even conceptualized what exist today as comparative government.

Herodotus treatise on *History* exposed the curiosity in Greeks of the fifth century to the laws, customs and institutions of other parts of the world. It became obvious that some behaviour which were upheld and praised in one place maybe condemned and ridiculed in another. Individual sought to live within the standard of their various countries as such customs and laws formed the basis of regulation and social control. The book contained dialogues on issues relating to such forms of government as monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Such contending issues as the virtues of monarchy, or the rule of one-best man and subsequent degeneration to tyranny, the desirability of the so-called equality in democracy and nature of mob rule which is a corrupt form of democracy were widely discussed.

At a point, political debates in Athens centered on economic issues and the polemics between proponents of aristocracy of the old and well born families of land owners, and democracy dominated by new interests of foreign trade with the aim to developing Athenian power on the sea. Meanwhile, while contention and debates on the best form of government was prevalent in Athens, conservatism and political stability dominated the trends in Sparta. In view of the dynamics of Athenian politics and democracy, the political system in Athens was described in terms of progress especially with the eventual triumph of democracy during the political career of Pericles. Generally, Athenian political history and that of other Greek city states remained characterized by active party struggle and rapid constitutional change.

The relevance of economic factors in Athenian politics is revealed by the triumph of democracy over aristocracy in the city state. In the supposed Xenophon work, *Constitution of Athens*, the author conceives the constitution as a perfect instrument of government and a perverted form of government. The author conceives democracy as a device for exploiting the rich and putting wealth in the hands of the poor. He observed that with democracy, one cannot even identify a slave out there on the street. For him, the popular court was simply a clever way of distributing pay to six thousand jury men and compelling Athens allies to spend money in Athens while waiting to transact their judicial business (Sabine and Thorson 1973: 38).

### **3.3.1. The Sophist**

The principal ideas presented by the Sophist are that nature should not be conceived as setting a rule of ideal justice and right. They repudiated the impression that slavery or nobility of birth are both natural phenomena. Specifically, Sophist Antiphon argued that there was no difference between a Greek and a Barbarian. In his book, *On Truth*, he equivocally affirmed that all laws are merely conventional and therefore contrary to nature. Justice may be thought of as a convention having no other basis but the law of the state itself while nature is considered non-moral.

Consequently, most of what is just according to the law is against nature and men who are not self assertive usually loose more than they gain. Nature assumed the image as

simply egoism or self-interest and a rule of strength. This stimulated contention and attempts to establish the true nature of nature. One dominant perspective conceived nature as a law of justice and rights inherent in human being and the world. The other conceived nature non-morally as self assertion and egoism manifesting in the desire for pleasure and power.

### **3.3.2. Socrates**

Socrates exhibited the rational tradition of raw philosophy based on the belief that virtue is knowledge which can be learned and taught. He was engaged in the quest for a valid general rule of action and imparting through education. Furthermore, he was concerned with generating precise definition of issues with the belief that if ethical concepts can be defined, a scientific application of them in specific cases can be attained. The ensuing science in his view can be used to sustain a society of demonstrable excellence. This was indeed the vision philosophers like Plato were concerned with in their search for the best state.

Socrates remained an outspoken critic of the Athenian democracy based on the assumption that any man can assume an office. He was accused of corrupting innocent mind and later executed. The work of Socrates greatly influenced Plato and some of the ideas presented by him are still relevant in the contemporary world. For instance, the notion that democracy does not really lead to the emergence of the best to govern the state is indisputably correct.

### **3.3.3. Aristophanes**

**Aristophanes** (445-380 BC) was a Greek philosopher who defended the aristocratic order of Greek politics. For him, democracy was not a good form of government because it created avenue for unqualified people to occupy political positions. In his dialogue in *The Knight*, he observed that although the sausage seller lacked the competence to conduct public affairs, that such lack of competence was in essence, an advantage. Similarly, he denounced early reforms in Athens where poor citizens paid as jurors, ridiculed the practice of justice. Like Xenophon, he maintained that many unqualified people joined the juror for the sake of money.

In his work, *Ecclesiazusae*, he outlined the new order of the state. Here, he advocated that women are to oust men from politics and that marriage should be discarded and all women and men will be common and free. Consequently, he proposed that children should be kept in ignorance of their true parents and are to be equally the sons of their elders. This he demonstrated in the dialogue between Praxagoras and Blepyrus. He further advocated that labour is to be performed only by slaves while gambling, theft and law suits should be abolished.

The ideas of Aristophanes are very representative of his time. This coincided with the same time when Plato wrote his manuscript on *Republic*. As such, it is not very clear who actually preceded the other. However, one basic fact is that Aristophanes favoured communism or a system of communal ownership of property as a substitute for democracy which he condemned.

## Self-Assessment Exercises 1

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *The Great Age of political philosophy came after the downfall of \_\_\_ in her struggle with Sparta.*
  - A. Rom
  - B. Athens
  - C. Macedonia
  - D. Palestine
2. *The \_\_\_ repudiated the impression that slavery or nobility of birth are both natural phenomena.*
  - A. Sophist
  - B. Traditionalists
  - C. Philosophers
  - D. Populists
3. *The Greek philosopher who defended the aristocratic order of Greek politics is called \_\_\_\_*
  - A. Socrates
  - B. Aristotle
  - C. Plato
  - D. Aristophanes
4. *Which of the following was an outspoken critic of the Athenian democracy based on the assumption that any man can assume an office?*
  - A. Karl Marx
  - B. Sophists
  - C. Socrates
  - D. Philip the Great



### 3.4 Summary

In this unit, some of the basic ideas that existed before Plato were presented and discussed. It is worthy of note that the pronounced age during the third quarter of fifth century B.C. marked the great age of an Athenian public life. It was the period of inordinate search for wisdom and solution to the challenges bedeviling the human society. So, the fifth century B.C. was a watershed of political philosophy, which came only after the downfall of 'Athens in her struggle with Sparta. As in several cases in history, replication followed accomplishment and principles were conceptually stated only after they had long been denoted.



### 3.5 References/Further Readings

Sabine, G.H. & Thorson, T.L. (1973). *A History of Political Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. PVT LTD.

Varma, S.P. (2006). *Modern Political Theory*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House PVT LTD.



### 3.6 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

#### Answer to SAEs 1

1. B
2. A
3. D
4. C

## Unit 4: The Features of Greek Thought

### Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 The Features of Greek Thought
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Readings
- 4.6 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)



#### 4.1 Introduction

It has been established that the Greek City States of Athens and Sparta marked the place of the origin and advancement of political philosophy. Many of the political philosophers now subsumed under western political philosophers, Indian political philosophers, and African political philosophers, among others draw inspiration from the Greek political philosophers. Here, we shall identify and discuss some of the basic features of the Greek political thought of ancient Greece.



#### 4.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the features of the Greek political thought
- Discuss the features of the Greek political thought
- Relate the features of Greek political thought to the political thought after Greece.



#### 4.3 The Features of political thought

The Greek political thought have some salient features which are worthy of our discussion. These features have continued to shape contemporary political discussion and replicate bulk of the issues that constitute major topic of discussion in modern political thought. Some of those features are:

##### **Exclusively Political Character of Treatise:**

The ANU Online Education (n.d) stated that the ancient Greek political thought varies from the Political Thought of other ancient countries like Egypt, Babylonia, Syria, Persia, India, China, among others because it formed treatise of purely political nature. Other ancient civilizations and political ideas were inter-mixed with mythology and religious literature. For example, in India the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Manu Smriti, dealt with political problems, which are not totally political treatises. They were mainly religious



works in which political ideas were inter- mixed with religion and mythology and has to make special efforts to distinguish the politics from religion. In the case of Greek political thought, there are the existences of a number of independent treatises, which are meant to study political problems.

### **Main Concentration on Nature of State:**

Another important feature of the ancient Greek political thought was that it related itself mainly with the nature of the state and the concept that man is a political animal. This is encapsulated in the political philosophy of Aristotle, where he opined that man is a political animal. The Greek writers did not reflect themselves with the problems relating to the relations between the state and church, or state and industry, which were parts of political thought of later thinkers. When they consider man as a social animal they did not consider him as an isolated and independent individual and tried to understand him in relation to the social whole viz., the state. The state therefore occupied the central position of Greek political thinkers (Sabine & Thorson, 1973).

They discussed the origin and end of the state and distinguished between various forms of states like monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy, tyranny, among others etc. They also highlighted the points that the forms of government determine the order in which the changes take place in governments and the laws governing them.

### **Social Nature of Man:**

The Greek thinkers were the first to put weight on social nature of man and highlight that an individual could not think as a lonely and independent personality. He could get perfection only in a healthy state, so they considered state as essential for the sake of life as well as good life. Individuals must live and operate as a member of the *polis* (Sabine & Thorson, 1973).

### **The City State:**

Another significant feature of the Greek political thought was that it is positioned around the city states, in which men shared with community for common life and purpose; it was an ample social organization in which citizens uninterruptedly took part in. As Barker (1906) has observed, the Greeks were never tired of telling themselves that while in their communities, each man was counted for what he was worth and exercised his share of influence in the common life. It was a place of common life and the home of a union of classes. It did not abolish the prestige of wealth and birth and culture, it established a tradition of easy intercourse between all classes. The city state was also not different from church. It was to be –all and end-all of the actions of its citizens and included the entire cooperative actions of the citizens.

### **Importance of Education:**

Greek thinkers gave top significance to education and stressed its importance in making the people at par with the spirit of constitution. They highlighted on practical system of education which could help in promoting modesty, self- control, patriotism, sociability and other similar qualities. The responsibility to promote education was that of the state among the citizens. The state was not only considered as a moral and political

institution but also an educational institution. The Greeks place emphasis on the fact that the main pressure on state is to develop a skillful system of education, which according to them will help to liberate the minds of the people.

### **Rationalism:**

The Greeks gave important position to rationalism in their thought. They considered that reason is an important force that can make man free. They opined that when a man had freedom of reasoning, he can easily identify himself with corporate life, which is made to stop his personal and selfish interests and puts him into the jurisdiction of wider interpretations and higher purposes. Greek thinkers gave advantaged positions to persons who had the rational faculty and demoted those persons who did not have reason. They gave much importance to reason and were against anything which was not justified on ground of reason.

### **Concept of law:**

The Greek concept of law was connected with their belief in reason. They opined that the life-breath of the state was law, because it characterized the bane of the rational being. The people who make laws were stimulated by the divine power and that the laws were pronouncement of God. They saw law and justice as two sides of the same coin, and considered that justice is done by the law.

### **Views on Justice:**

The Greek political thinkers gave top priority to justice. According to them, it will enable a citizen to discharge his duties properly, and contributed towards the development of human faculties. Justice was implied to mean willing obedience to the laws of state. In The Republic, Plato designs a society in order to discover the meaning of justice.

### **Views on Citizenship:**

The Greek thinkers opined that merely payment of taxes and vote did not mean citizenship. It meant the direct contribution in the management of state as a soldier, as a judge, as a legislator in person not through deputy is what confirms citizenship. The Greek political thinkers ruled out the concept of representative government but supported the idea of direct democracy. The Greek did not extend rights of citizenship to slaves, because they felt the slaves could not discharge their duties towards the state. They denied the working classes the right to rule because they did not have speculative mind. They opined that only the classes which enjoyed leisure and owned lands can actively participate in the affairs of state, because they are free from economic burden, hence, the concept of citizenship was limited.

### **Belief in Inequality:**

The Greeks considered equality as impracticable, unnatural and undesirable as they argued that the majority of individuals who were inferior, lazy, unfit for education could be sacrificed at the altar of the minority of the excellent and wise. They measured that disparity is natural and allowed the dominance of Greeks over barbarous, of the free man over the slave; of the gentle man over the artisan, among others. They however

accepted the existence of equality within a class. They opined that equality was not an ideal thing, it was something unnatural and hence it is unrealistic and unwanted.

**Individualistic Element:**

The Greek political thinkers gave a significant position to the individual, their thought and claimed it was the right of an individual to articulate his own thoughts and direct these thoughts publicly and act according to the dictate of his conscience. Plato highlighted in his laws that society, a group of individuals and the individual was self-determined. Similarly, Epicurus said there is no such thing as human society. Even man is concerned for himself..... Justice never is anything in itself, but in delays of men with one another in any place whatever and at any time. It is a time of contract not to harm or be harmed.

**Primacy of Discussions:**

Another important feature of Greeks was that, they committed great importance to discussion. They approved the method of discussion for the presentation of their ideas and philosophy, and truth can be expressed only through proper reasoning and discussion. The novel method adopted by them was between two parties, one presenting the issue and other replying to those issues with philosophical ideas. They thought that truth would be hidden in the absence of discussion. In fact some of the concepts and ideas discussed by the ancient Greeks were focal points of discussion of contemporary political thought.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *An important feature of the ancient Greek political thought was that it related itself mainly with the nature of the state and the concept that man is a \_\_\_ animal.*
  - A. *Intellectual*
  - B. *Social*
  - C. *Political*
  - D. *Independent*
2. *The fact that an individual could not think as a lonely and independent personality is a justification of the \_\_\_\_\_ nature of man.*
  - A. *Reliable*
  - B. *Objective*
  - C. *Social*
  - D. *Realistic*
3. *The Greek political thinkers considered that \_\_\_ is an important force that can make man free.*
  - A. *Reason*
  - B. *Argument*
  - C. *Intelligence*
  - D. *Morality*
4. *The Greeks considered \_\_\_ as impracticable, unnatural and undesirable.*
  - A. *Inequality*
  - B. *Equality*

C. Injustice  
D. Education



#### 4.4 Summary

In this unit, we made an exhaustive discussion on some of the features of the ancient Greek political thought. These salient features of the Greek political thought have continued to reverberate in the discourse of political thought of the contemporary era. The idea therefore is that concepts developed by the Greek political thought such as democracy, aristocracy, oligarchy, monarchy, among others are commonly used in modern political discourse. The centrality of the discussion of the ancient Greeks on the state, pattern of governance, citizenship and the virtues that typifies man as a social being is still very relevant in modern political analysis and thought. Students will find the discussion here very crucial to their understanding of modern political thought.



#### 4.5 References/Further Readings

- Barker, E. (1906). *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*. Methuen: G. P. Putnam's Sons
- Sabine, G.H. & Thorson, T.L. (1973). *A History of Political Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. PVT LTD.
- Varma, S.P. (2006). *Modern Political Theory*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House PVT LTD.



#### 4.6 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

##### Answer to SAEs 1

1. C
2. C
3. A
4. B

<b>Module 2</b>	<b>Classical Era and the Theory of the City State</b>
Unit 1	Plato and the Ideal State
Unit 2	Aristotle and the Theory of the State
Unit 3	Decline of City States
Unit 4	Marcus Tullius Cicero

## **Unit 1: Plato and the Ideal State**

### **Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Plato and the Ideal State
  - 1.3.1 Plato: His Life and Times (427-347 BC).
  - 1.3.2 Factors that shaped Plat's Political Philosophy
  - 1.3.3 Plato's Republic
  - 1.3.4 Plato's Ideal State and Best Form of Government
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to Self Assessment Exercises



### **1.1 Introduction**

This unit examines the political thoughts of Plato. Specifically, it begins with an exploration of the life and times of Plato as a background to understanding the prevailing orientations and influence on him. In the history of political thought, no thinker evoked the admiration, reverence and criticism that Plato (428/27-347 BC) did. This outstanding Greek philosopher has left behind many important works, out of which three, the *Republic*, (380-370 BC), the *Statesman* (360 BC) and the *Laws* (350 BC), are of perennial interest to all those interested in the history of political ideas. Plato has been generally regarded as the founder of philosophical idealism by virtue of his conviction that there is a universal idea in the world of eternal reality beyond the world of the senses. He was the first to formulate and define political ideas within a larger framework of a philosophical idea of Good (Das, n.d.:2). The influences which Socrates had on Plato are also highlighted. The focus on Plato examines his treatment of the forms of government, nature of education, his thesis of the philosopher-king and other classes in society.



### **1.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the factors that shaped Plato's political philosophy
- Know about Plato's Republic
- Understand Plato's Ideal State



### **1.3 Plato and the Ideal State**

#### **1.3.1. Plato: His Life and Times (427-347 BC)**

Plato was the son of a wealthy and influential Athenian parent. He began his philosophical life as a student of Socrates. Following the death of his master, Plato travelled to Egypt and Italy where he studied with students of Pythagoras. He remained an adviser to the ruling family of Syracuse for several years before returning to Athens to establish his school of philosophy called The Academy, where he sought to transmit the philosophical heritage of Socrates to his students through mathematical learning, to the achievement of abstract philosophical truth. It is this platform that constitutes the written dialogues on which his enduring reputation rests.

At inception, Plato sought to convey the spirit of Socrates' teaching by presenting accurate reports of the master's conversational interaction through series of dialogue which later became the major source of information on the thoughts of Socrates. Such early dialogues were typically devoted to the investigation of single issues, about which a conclusive result is rarely achieved. For instance, the Euthyphro raised significant doubts about whether morally right action can be defined in terms of divine approval by pointing out a significant dilemma about any appeal to authority in defence of moral judgments.

The Apology offers a description of the philosophical life as Socrates presented it in his own defence before the jury in Athens. The Crito utilized the circumstances of Socrates imprisonment to ask whether an individual citizen is ever justified for refusing to obey the state. The middle dialogues of Plato continued to utilize Socrates as a fictional character to develop, express, and defend his own, more firmly established, conclusions about central philosophical issues. For instance, Plato utilized the Meno, to introduce the doctrine of recollection in an attempt to discover whether or not virtue can be taught. He also utilized it to report the logics of Socrates that no one knowingly does wrong.

The Phaedo was useful in the development of Plato's philosophy by presenting the doctrine of the Forms in support of a series of argument that demonstrates the immortality of the human soul. Among the other dialogues of this period are Plato's treatments of human emotion in general and of love in particular in the Phaedrus and Symposium. The masterpiece in the series of Plato's middle dialogues is revealed in The Republic.

It adopted as its point of departure, the conversations of Socrates about the nature of justice and proceeds directly to an extended discussion on the virtue (Gk: arete) of justice (Gk: dikaiosune), wisdom (Gk: sophia), courage (Gk: andreia) and moderation (Gk: sophrosune) as they appear both in individual human beings and in society as a whole. This plan for the ideal society or person requires detailed accounts of human knowledge of the kind of educational programme by which it may be achieved by men

and women alike, captured in a powerful image of the possibilities for human life in the allegory of the cave.

The dialogue concludes with a review of various forms of government, an explicit description of the ideal state, in which only the philosopher king are fit to rule, and an attempt to show that justice is better than injustice. Plato's later writings often modify or completely abandon the formal structure of dialogue. They include a critical examination of the theory of forms in *Parmenides*, an extended discussion of the problem of knowledge in *Theaetetus*, cosmological speculations in *Timaeus*, and an interminable treatment of government in the unfinished *Laws*.

### **1.3.2. Factors that shaped Plato's Political Philosophy**

The political thought of Plato was resulted partly from current intellectual climate and principal political conditions and partly from the ideas from Pythagoras, Parmenides, Heraclitus and Socrates. In fact no political philosophy is intelligible save in the context of its time, and this is true about Plato's philosophy as well.

After the death of Pericles in 429 B.C., the Athenian leadership had destroyed to a low level. The execution of Socrates made Plato to take the task of rebuilding philosophically the moral fiber and political organization of Athens. To achieve this end, he agreed with certain solutions which were observed as the most inspiring and excellent ideas in the history of political thought.

Plato was influenced by the conditions at his time. The Greek thinkers namely, Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Socrates influenced him. From Pythagoras he learned the theory of Tripartite Man, which says human mind is made of three elements; the appetite, the spirit and the reason. Socrates had the utmost influence on Plato's life, he was influenced by Socratic theory of knowledge and he advanced it into a system of Metaphysics. It says, each theory which we observe in this world in an imperfect imagination of a perfect original called the 'Idea' or 'Form'. There is a seeming 'Dualism' i.e., there are two worlds – the world of being and the world of becoming. The world of being is a static world of perfection or an ideal world, which is real because it is ideal or perfect and the world of becoming, which is an active world of imperfection, a world of particular things, which is imaginary because it is imperfect. Whereas the former is world of reason, the later is world of sense – perception.

Plato was also obligated to Socrates for his identification of virtue with knowledge. Socrates said that, there could be no 'virtue' or 'excellence' without knowledge. Storage of facts is not knowledge. Socrates said knowledge and morality are identical. Knowledge influenced the total personality; hence, all qualities are inferior to knowledge. In fact, the proposal 'virtue is knowledge' is the important idea of the *Republic*. The entire theme of Rule of Philosophy which Plato built up in the '*Republic*' is based on Socrates proposal that virtue is knowledge.

### 1.3.3. Plato's Republic

The *Republic* is the greatest and most well-known work of Plato. It was written in the form of a dialogue, a method of great importance in clarifying questions and establishing truth. It was one of the finest examples of the dialectical method as stated and first developed by Socrates. Though Socrates did not provide a theoretical exposition of the method, he established a clear-cut pattern of dialectical reasoning for others to follow. He placed dialectics in the service of ethics, defining virtue as a basis for rational and moral transformation. He used the method to secure answers about human beings and society, and not nature. "Political philosophy emerged by way of an ethical question which nature could never answer; the problems of men were not strictly coterminous with the problems of nature" (Wolin, 1960: 30).

The discussions in the *Republic* were conducted in a single room among Socrates, Cephalus and his son Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, Glaucon and Adeimantus. Cephalus, Polemarchus and Thrasymachus appeared in Book I, while the discussion in the later books was carried on by Socrates and Plato's two brothers. In fact, Socrates was the main spokesman.

The *Republic* in Greek meant "justice", and should not be understood in its Latin sense meaning "the state or the polity". It began with the quest of understanding the Idea of Good, and explained how a perfect soul could be developed. Its core has been succinctly summarized as follows.

Philosophy meant to him what it meant to his master. The Socratic philosophy, analysed and formulated in the early dialogues, was not the study of nature or logic or metaphysics; it was the pursuit of wisdom, and to achieve wisdom would be to achieve human perfection, well being and happiness. This again meant not merely "caring for one's own soul" as an isolated individual, saving himself and leaving society to its fate. Human excellence, as Plato and Aristotle after him always maintained, is the excellence of an essentially social creature, a citizen. To produce this experience and consequent well being is the true end of the "Royal Art" of statesmanship. Hence the life of philosophy and the life of the active statesman ought not to be, as they appeared to Callicles, alternative careers, but a single life in which all the highest powers of man would find full expression. Society could be saved only by reuniting the two elements which had been drifting apart.

The book explored the notion of justice and its realization within the individual and the state. It sketched a detailed picture of the polity and social institutions, with a view to attaining human excellence and perfection. It had an elaborate scheme of education, which led Rousseau to comment that it was hardly a political work, but the finest treatise on education ever written. It contained a detailed examination of the meaning of good life and outlined the means to achieve it.



In the *Republic*, practically every side of Plato's philosophy is touched upon or developed, and its range of subject matter is such that it may be said to deal with the whole of human life. It has to do with the good man and the good life, which for Plato connoted life in a good state and with the means for knowing what they are and for attaining them. And to a problem so general no side of individual or social activity is alien. Hence the *Republic* is not a treatise of any sort, nor does it belong to politics, or ethics, or economics, or psychology, though it includes all these, and more, for art and education and philosophy are not excluded.

#### **1.3.4 Plato's Ideal State and Best Form of Government**

Writing on the ideal state or polis, Plato describes it as a just state based on justice which is the earthly manifestation of the human soul. He identified two basic principles that underlie the polis as the mutual needs of the individuals that make up the polis and secondly, the various aptitudes to be realized. From this, he describes the polis as a natural growth with its modes and mores and based on the needs and aptitudes of its members.

Plato shares the view that to establish or govern a state is labour to which the human hero shows himself most godlike while the life of political service is the crown of human blessedness. Plato further identified three major social classes in the ideal state as the rulers, the soldiers and the producer or workers which corresponds to the soul's three operative elements and corresponds respectively to the *Nous*, *Thumos* and *Soma*. The *Nous* or Reason refers to the Philosopher Kings or rulers who with the aptitude of wisdom govern and legislate for the polis.

They are the lovers of wisdom, truth and knowledge. This category of officials should neither marry nor own property. The *Thumos* or Spirit refers to the soldiers or auxiliaries and guardians of the rulers. They are primarily concerned with the defence of the polis. This class must be sustained by courage and fortitude to keep order and control of workers. They must be subject to the Philosopher Kings and must possess neither property nor wealth. The *Soma* or body refers to the producers, that is, the workers in the society.

Members of this class are guided by the desire for satisfaction of senses and with their desire and temperance provide the polis with material subsistence. They are subject to the *Nous* and *Thumos* and have no significant political responsibility. Members of this class can get married and own property. Plato contends that in an ideal state the harmony of these classes are safeguarded by justice especially as it concerns their duties and rights. Plato extols "Aristocracy" as the best form of government where only the best rule for general interests.

To this form of government, he describes others as inferior. He subsequently identified and describes other forms of government as degeneration from the ideal state. Specifically, he described Timocracy as a government of honour and ambition; degeneration from the ideal state where dissension exists between two elements of the

governing class; the ruler and the guardian no longer experience cordial relations with their subjects.

The violence of their opposition is resolved in compromise under which they distribute land and houses to private ownership, while the subjects (producers) whom they once guarded as freemen are reduced to menials and constantly held in subjection. Another deviation from the ideal state is Oligarchy. Here, the few rule in their narrow and selfish interests.

Under oligarchy, it is wealth or property qualification that counts and political power is in the hands of the rich and the poor have no share of it. In oligarchy, the process of accumulation is in private hands and this heightens the possibility of perversion of the law. Here, the state suffers as the majority of its citizens are poor and beggarly and often lack proper education.

Plato further classified democracy as another deviation from the ideal state. He conceived democracy as originating from the conflict of the minority rich and majority poor wherein the poor emerged victorious. He described it as a society where there is equality of political opportunity and freedom for every individual member to do as he likes. Such a society for Plato lacks high principles and ideals and has a little restriction in desires as the law is underrated. The last degeneration from the ideal state in the views of Plato is Tyranny. This society is characterised by the oppressive government either by an absolute ruler or group of rulers which administer with cruelty and without due regards for the rule of law.

Plato attributes it to the excessive emphasis of liberty under democracy. In his view, tyranny is the worst form of government. In a nutshell, Plato's ideal state is based on reason and controlled by the Philosopher King. It pursues the attainment of the best objective of the state which he classified as happiness. He proposed that the Philosopher King must emerge through a rigorous process of education which involves both theoretical and practical orientations and that this education will continue until they are at least fifty years.

It is expected that the curriculum must cut across disciplines such as mathematics, physical education, politics, psychology and philosophy. Only persons who have successfully completed this curriculum and emerged outstanding will take their turn to steer the turbulent ship of statecraft. It is on this background that Plato is classified as an idealist or utopian political philosopher.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *Plato began his philosophical life as a student of \_\_\_\_\_.*
  - A. *Pericles*
  - B. *Sophists*
  - C. *Socrates*

- D. Aristotle
2. The fact that no political philosophy is intelligible save in the context of its time does not really apply to Plato's philosophy. True/False
  3. The greatest and most well-known work of Plato is called \_\_\_\_
    - A. The Republic
    - B. The Polis
    - C. The Dialogue
    - D. The Pericles
  4. The best form of government according to Plato is \_\_\_\_
    - A. Democracy
    - B. Aristocracy
    - C. Oligarchy
    - D. Theocracy



#### 1.4 Summary

Plato's ideal state as discussed in the Republic was arguably Plato's most influential work. It portrays several dialogues between the philosopher and several observers in which they discuss a philosophical theory for an ideal state. The central belief is that "justice and happiness stand and fall together. Not because good consequences...follow from being just, but because justice itself is so great that nothing gained by injustice could be greater. Therefore, this unit explored the political thought of Plato as well as the orientations and influences that shaped his views as it relates to forms of government, nature of education and thesis on philosopher kings.



#### 1.5. References/Further Readings

- Sabine, G.H. & Thorson, T.L. (1973). *A History of Political Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. PVT LTD.
- Varma, S.P. (2006). *Modern Political Theory*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House PVT LTD.
- Wolin, S. S. (1960). *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.



#### 1.6 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

##### Answer to SAEs 1

1. C
2. False
3. A
4. B

## Unit 2: Aristotle and the Theory of the State

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 Aristotle's Philosophy
  - 2.3.1. Aristotle's View of Politics
  - 2.3.2. Aristotle's Theory of Constitutions and Citizenship
  - 2.3.3. Aristotle's Study of Specific Constitutions
  - 2.3.4. Aristotle's view of Law
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises



### 2.1 Introduction

This unit undertakes a comprehensive discussion of the life, time and philosophy of Aristotle. Born at Stagira in Northern Greece, Aristotle was the most notable product of the educational programme devised by Plato; he spent twenty years of his life studying at the Academy. When Plato died, Aristotle returned to his native Macedonia, where he is supposed to have participated in the education of Philip's son, Alexander (the Great). He came back to Athens with Alexander's approval in 335 BC and established his own school at the Lyceum, spending most of the rest of his life engaged there in research, teaching, and writing. His students acquired the name "peripatetics" from the master's habit of strolling about as he taught. Although the surviving works of Aristotle probably represent only a fragment of the whole, they include his investigations of an amazing range of subjects, from logic, philosophy, and ethics to physics, biology, psychology, politics, and rhetoric. Aristotle appears to have thought through his views as he wrote, returning to significant issues at different stages of his own development. The result is less a consistent system of thought than a complex record of Aristotle's thinking about many significant issues.



### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss Aristotle's view of politics
- Examine Aristotle's theory of constitutions and citizenship
- Highlight Aristotle's study of specific constitutions
- Elucidate on Aristotle's views of the law



### 2.3 Aristotle's Philosophy

Aristotle (322 – 384BC), was a Greek philosopher, logician, and scientist. Along with his teacher Plato, Aristotle is generally regarded as one of the most influential ancient thinkers in several philosophical fields, including political theory. Aristotle was born in Stagira in northern Greece, and his father was a court physician to the king of Macedon. As a young man, he studied at Plato's Academy in Athens. After Plato's death, he left Athens to conduct philosophical and biological research in Asia Minor and Lesbos, and he was then invited by King Philip II of Macedon to tutor his young son, Alexander the Great. Soon after Alexander succeeded his father, consolidated the conquest of the Greek city-states, and launched the invasion of the Persian Empire. Aristotle returned as a resident alien to Athens and was a close friend of Antipater, the Macedonian viceroy (Jowett, 1984). At this time (335 –323 BC) he wrote, or at least worked on, some of his major treatises, including the *Politics*. When Alexander died suddenly, Aristotle had to flee from Athens because of his Macedonian connections, and he died soon after (Kraut, 2002).

### **2.3.1 Aristotle's View of Politics**

Political science studies the tasks of the politician or statesman, in much the way that medical science concerns the work of the physician. It is, in fact, the body of knowledge that such practitioners, if truly expert, will also wield in pursuing their tasks. The most important task for the politician is, in the role of the lawgiver, to frame the appropriate constitution for the city-state. This involves enduring laws, customs, and institutions (including a system of moral education) for the citizens.

Once the constitution is in place, the politician needs to take the appropriate measures to maintain it, to introduce reforms when he finds them necessary, and to prevent developments which might subvert the political system. This is the province of legislative science, which Aristotle regards as more important than politics as exercised in everyday political activity such as the passing of decrees (Kraut, 2002).

Aristotle frequently compares the politician to a craftsman. The analogy is imprecise because politics, in the strict sense of legislative science, is a form of practical knowledge, while a craft like architecture or medicine is a form of productive knowledge. However, the comparison is valid to the extent that the politician produces, operates and maintains a legal system according to universal principles.

In order to appreciate this analogy, it is helpful to observe that Aristotle explains the production of an artifact in terms of four causes: the material, formal, efficient, and final causes. For example, clay (material cause) is molded into a vase shape (formal cause) by a potter (efficient or moving cause) so that it can contain liquid (final cause). One can also explain the existence of the city-state in terms of the four causes. It is a kind of community, that is, a collection of parts having some functions and interests in common. Hence, it is made up of parts, which Aristotle describes in various ways in different contexts: as households or economic classes (e.g., the rich and the poor), or demes (i.e., local political units). But, ultimately, the city-state is composed of individual citizens, who, along with natural resources, are the “material” or “equipment” out of which the city-state is fashioned (Jowett, 1984).

The formal cause of the city-state is its constitution. Aristotle defines the constitution as “a certain ordering of the inhabitants of the city-state”. He also speaks of the constitution of a community as “the form of the compound” and argues that whether the community is the same over time depends on whether it has the same constitution. The constitution is not a written document, but an imminent organizing principle, analogous to the soul of an organism. Hence, the constitution is also “the way of life” of the citizens. Here the citizens are that minority of the resident population who possess full political rights (Miller, 1995).

The existence of the city-state also requires an efficient cause, namely, its ruler. On Aristotle's view, a community of any sort can possess order only if it has a ruling element of authority. This ruling principle is defined by the constitution, which sets criteria for political offices, particularly the sovereign office. However, on a deeper level, there must be an efficient cause to explain why a city-state acquires its constitution in the first place. Aristotle states that “the person who first established [the city-state] is the cause of very great benefits”. This person was evidently the lawgiver, someone like Solon of Athens or Lycurgus of Sparta, who founded the constitution. Aristotle compares the lawgiver, or the politician more generally, to a craftsman such as a weaver or shipbuilder, who fashions material into a finished product.

To sum up, the city-state is a matter-form compound of a particular population (i.e., citizen-body) in a given territory (material cause) and a constitution (formal cause). The constitution itself is fashioned by the lawgiver and is governed by politicians, who are like craftsmen (efficient cause), and the constitution defines the aim of the city-state.

### **2.3.2 Aristotle's Theory of Constitutions and Citizenship**

Aristotle states that “the politician and lawgiver are wholly occupied with the city-state, and the constitution is a certain way of organising those who inhabit the city-state”. His general theory of constitutions is set forth in *Politics III*. He begins with a definition of the citizen since the city-state is by nature a collective entity, a multitude of citizens. Citizens are distinguished from other inhabitants, such as resident aliens and slaves; and even children and seniors are not unqualified citizens (nor are most ordinary workers).

After further analysis, he defines the citizen as a person who has the right to participate in deliberative or judicial office. In Athens, for example, citizens had the right to attend the assembly, the council, and other bodies, or to sit on juries. The Athenian system differed from a modern representative democracy in that the citizens were more directly involved in governing.

Although full citizenship tended to be restricted in the Greek city-states (with women, slaves, foreigners, and some others excluded), the citizens were more deeply enfranchised than in modern representative democracies because they were more directly involved in governing. This is reflected in Aristotle's definition of the citizen

(without qualification). Further, he defines the city-state (in the unqualified sense) as a multitude of such citizens which is adequate for a self-sufficient life (Roberts, 2009).

Aristotle defines the constitution as a way of organizing the offices of the city-state, particularly the sovereign office. The constitution thus defines the governing body, which takes different forms: for example, in a democracy, it is the people, and in an oligarchy, it is a select few (the wealthy or well- born). Before attempting to distinguish and evaluate various constitutions Aristotle considers two questions. First, why does a city-state come into being?

He recalls the thesis, defended in *Politic* that human beings are by nature political animals, who naturally want to live together. This sets the stage for the fundamental claim of Aristotle's constitutional theory: "constitutions which aim at the common advantage are correct and just without qualification, whereas those which aim only at the advantage of the rulers are deviant and unjust because they involve despotic rule which is inappropriate for a community of free persons".

The distinction between correct and deviant constitutions is combined with the observation that government may consist of one person, a few, or a multitude. Hence, there are six possible constitutional forms:

<b>Style</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Concept</b>
One Ruler	Kingship	Tyranny
Few Rulers	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Many Rulers	Polity	Democracy

This six-fold classification (which is adapted from Plato's *Statesman* 302c- d) sets the stage for Aristotle's inquiry into the best constitution, although it is modified in various ways throughout the *Politics*. For example, he observes that the dominant class in oligarchy (literally rule of the oligoi, i.e., few) is typically the wealthy, whereas in democracy (literally rule of the dêmos, i.e., people) it is the poor, so that these economic classes should be included in the definition of these forms. Also, polity is later characterised as a kind of "mixed" constitution typified by the rule of the "middle" group of citizens, a moderately wealthy class between the rich and poor (Yack, 1993).

Aristotle's constitutional theory is based on his theory of justice, which is expounded in *Nicomachean Ethics* book V. Aristotle distinguishes two different but related senses of "justice" universal and particular both of which play an important role in his constitutional theory. Firstly, in the universal sense "justice" means "lawfulness" and is concerned with the common advantage and happiness of the political community. The conception of universal justice undergirds the distinction between correct (just) and deviant (unjust) constitutions. But what exactly the "common advantage" entails is a matter of scholarly controversy (Yack, 1993).

Some passages imply that justice involves the advantage of all the citizens; for example, every citizen of the best constitution has a just claim to private property and education. But Aristotle also allows that it might be "in a way" just to ostracise powerful

citizens even when they have not been convicted of any crimes. Whether Aristotle understands the common advantage as safeguarding the interests of each and every citizen has a bearing on whether he anticipates what moderns would understand as a theory of individual rights. Secondly, in the particular sense “justice” means “equality” or “fairness” and this includes distributive justice, according to which different individuals have a just claims to shares of some common asset such as property.

Aristotle analyses arguments for and against the different constitutions as different applications of the principle of distributive justice. He says that justice involves treating equal persons equally and treating unequal persons unequally. But most do not agree on the standard by which individuals are deemed to be equally (or unequally) meritorious or deserving. He assumes his own analysis of distributive justice set forth in *Nicomachean Ethics*: Justice requires that benefits be distributed to individuals in proportion to their merit or desert (Nichols, 1992).

The oligarchs mistakenly think that those who are superior in wealth should also have superior political rights, whereas the democrats hold that those who are equal in free birth should also have equal political rights. Both of these conceptions of political justice are mistaken in Aristotle's view because they assume a false conception of the ultimate end of the city-state. The city-state is neither a business enterprise to maximise wealth (as the oligarchs suppose) nor an association to promote liberty and equality (as the democrats maintain). Instead, Aristotle argues, “the good life is the end of the city-state,” that is, a life consisting of noble actions (Depew, 2009).

### **2.3.3 Aristotle's Study of Specific Constitutions**

Regarding the ideal constitution, Aristotle criticises the views of his predecessors in *Politics* and then offers a rather sketchy blueprint of his own in *Politics VII and VIII*. Although his own political views were influenced by his teacher Plato, Aristotle is highly critical of the ideal constitution set forth in Plato's *Republic* because it overvalues political unity, it embraces a system of communism that is impractical and inimical to human nature, and it neglects the happiness of the individual citizens.

In contrast, in Aristotle's *Best Constitution*, each and every citizen will possess moral virtue and the equipment to carry it out in practice, and thereby attain a life of excellence and complete happiness. All of the citizens will hold political office and possess private property because “one should call the city-state happy not by looking at a part of it but at all the citizens”. Moreover, there will be a common system of education for all the citizens, because they share the same end (Depew, 2009).

If as is the case with most existing city-states, the population lacks the capacities and resources for complete happiness, however, the lawgiver must be content with fashioning a suitable constitution. The second-best system typically takes the form of a polity (in which citizens possess an inferior, more common grade of virtue) or mixed constitution combining features of democracy, oligarchy, and, where possible, aristocracy, so that no group of citizens is in a position to abuse its rights.



Aristotle argues that for city-states that fall short of the ideal, the best constitution is one controlled by a numerous middle class, which stands between the rich and the poor. For those who possess the goods of fortune in moderation find it easiest to obey the rule of reason. They are accordingly less apt than the rich or poor to act unjustly toward their fellow citizens. A constitution based on the middle class is the mean between the extremes of oligarchy (rule by the rich) and democracy (rule by the poor). That the middle [constitution] is best is evident, for it is the freest from faction: where the middle class is numerous, there least occur factions and divisions among citizens. The middle constitution is, therefore, both more stable and more just than oligarchy and democracy (Depew, 2009).

Although Aristotle classifies democracy as a deviant constitution (albeit the best of a bad lot), he argues that a case might be made for the popular rule in *Politics III*. This analogy has attracted the attention of modern democratic theorists. The central claim is that the many may turn out to be better than the virtuous few when they come together, even though the many may be inferior when considered individually. For if each individual has a portion of virtue and practical wisdom, they may pool these assets and turn out to be better rulers than even a very wise individual. This argument seems to anticipate modern arguments for “the wisdom of the multitude” (Aquinas, 2007).

In addition, the political scientist must attend to existing constitutions even when they are bad. Aristotle notes that “to reform a constitution is no less a task [of politics] than it is to establish one from the beginning,” and in this way “the politician should also help existing constitutions”. The political scientist should also be cognizant of forces of political change which can undermine an existing regime. Aristotle criticizes his predecessors for excessive utopianism and neglect of the practical duties of a political theorist. However, he is no Machiavellian. The best constitution still serves as a regulative ideal by which to evaluate existing systems (Irwin, 1985).

#### **2.3.4 Aristotle’s View of Law**

Aristotle champions the rule of law against power because he recognizes the dangers of overreaching of all kinds: whether on behalf of those who rule, the people, or the polity itself. Accordingly, he distinguishes categorically between political or rotational rule, on the one hand, and mastery, on the other, calling mastery (or absolute rule) inimical to political life. He is on the whole hostile to rule by the people, and particularly hostile to the kind of freedom as license he takes most forms of democracy to encourage. Indeed, Aristotle treats the rule of law as a constituent feature of any regime worthy of being called a regime. In Aristotle’s view, however, law too must be moderated, for laws also, and all too often, aim at domination. It is for this reason that he insists, following in the footsteps of Socrates, that unjust law must be disobeyed. In so far as he takes the justice of laws to depend on the individual practice of good judgment, Aristotle sees the rule of men, via their good judgment, as moderating excesses in the sovereignty of law (Aquinas, 2007).

Aristotle, in other words, holds both that the rule of law and especially as we will see, the constitution, moderates the rule of men, and also that the rule of men moderates the

rule of law, including the constitution. Aristotle understands a constitution as both a rule of recognition and as a rule of reason. And he takes a constitution to be binding because it is a product of citizen acquiescence and reason and also because of its intentional design.

In these ways, Aristotle's constitutionalism brings together the three disjunctive ontological and normative answers offered by contemporary theorists. Through Aristotle's treatment of the figure of Theramenes in his Constitution of the Athenians, Aristotle understands social acceptance of, or citizen acquiescence to a constitution not as a fact, but as an active and everyday practice on the part of citizens, informed by reason. And, naming the reason proper to politics practical wisdom, he takes reason to be regulative and indeed, imperative not because it is transcendent or apolitical but because it is situation sensitive and responsive to context (Barker, 1959).

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *As a young man, Aristotle studied at Plato's \_\_\_\_ in Athens.*
  - A. *Academy*
  - B. *Institute*
  - C. *University*
  - D. *School of Polis*
2. *'A certain ordering of the inhabitants of the city-state' according to Aristotle is called \_\_\_\_.*
  - A. *Law and Order*
  - B. *Democracy*
  - C. *The Government*
  - D. *The Constitution*
3. *Aristotle argues that for city-states that fall short of the ideal, the best constitution is one controlled by a numerous \_\_\_\_ class, which stands between the rich and the poor.*
  - A. *Upper*
  - B. *Middle*
  - C. *Lower*
  - D. *Upper – Middle*
4. *Which of the following was considered a deviant constitution by Aristotle?*
  - A. *Aristocracy*
  - B. *Monarchy*
  - C. *Democracy*
  - D. *Tyranny*



## 2.4 Summary

Aristotle's life seems to have influenced his political thought in various ways: his interest in biology seems to be expressed in the naturalism of his politics; his interest in comparative politics and his sympathies for democracy as well as monarchy may have been encouraged by his travels and experience of diverse political systems; he criticises harshly while borrowing extensively, from Plato's *Republic*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*; and his own *Politics* is intended to guide rulers and statesmen, reflecting the high political circles in which he moved.



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## **2.6 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)**

### **Answer to SAEs 1**

1. A
2. D
3. B
4. C

## Unit 3: Decline of City States

### Unit Structure

- 3.1. Introduction
- 3.2. Learning Outcomes
- 3.3. The Decline of the City-States
  - 3.3.1. Epicurean Philosophy
  - 3.3.2. The Cynics
  - 3.3.3. The Stoic
- 3.4. Summary
- 3.5. References/Further Reading



### 3.1 Introduction

This unit of the module examines the ideas that emerged towards the end of the era of polis which posed philosophical questions on some critical aspects upon which the city state were based. These new ideas in no small way contributed to stimulate curiosity that facilitated the decline of the city states. Specifically, the ideas expressed by the epicureans, stoics and cynics will be discussed.



### 3.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- To discuss the prevailing ideas in the build up to the end of the city states
- To discuss the basis of the teachings of the epicureans, stoics and cynics
- To analyse how these teaching contributed to facilitate the decline of the city states.



### 3.3 The Decline of the City – States

#### 3.3.1 Epicurean Philosophy

Epicurean philosophy sought to inculcate in its students, a state of individual self-sufficiency. Its primary teaching is that a good life consists of the enjoyment of pleasure. To the Epicureans, happiness implies the avoidance of pain, worry and anxiety. It involves a withdrawal from the useless cares of public life. It constitutes the realm of intrinsic virtue and value. The wise man in their view will have nothing to do with politics unless circumstances compel him to do so.

The Epicurean philosophy identified the anxiety of religion, of divine retribution and the incomprehensible whims of god and spirits as among the most serious consolations to

which men are heir. It further advanced the belief that the gods care not about men and do not interfere either for good or evil in the course of their lives. As such, it remained a caustic critic of all sorts of superstitious practice and beliefs, such as divination and astrology.

For the Epicurean philosophers, nature means physics and constitutes the atom from which all things are made. However, they observed that so far as the individuals are concerned, nature means self interest, the desire of every man for his own individual happiness. Consequently, all other regulations of human action belongs to the class of conventions and is therefore meaningless for the wise man, except in so far as a conventional rule may be serviceable in producing more happiness than men would get without it.

They however contend that all men are essentially selfish and seek only their own good. The pursuit of selfish good tends to endanger the good of everyone. To avert this, men enter into tacit agreement with each not to inflict or suffer one another. They further assert that the doing of injustice is not bad in itself, rather, that suffering injustice without protection is worst than any advantage arising from it. Consequently, men adopt as a working compromise the plan of respecting the rights of others for the sake of obtaining equal forbearance from them. It flows from this that states and law therefore emerged as a contract to facilitate intercourse between men and for the sake of obtaining mutual security especially against the depredations of other men. From this, they contend that justice is nothing without such a contract.

The Epicurean thesis reveals an attack on religion and superstition in an era when the significance of religion was steadily on the increase. It has been described as a philosophy of escape as it provided for men a source of peace and consolation. The full weight of Epicureanism as a political philosophy based on pure egoism and contract was re-enacted in the doctrine of Thomas Hobbes. The emphasis of Hobbes remained the same underlying materialism of the Epicurean thesis, its reduction of all human motives to self interest, and in its construction of the state upon the need for security.

### **3.3.2 The Cynics**

The Cynics propagated a protest against the City States and the social classifications upon which it rested. They argued that the one escape for man lay in the renunciation of everything that man classified as the good of life, the elimination of all social distinctions and in abandoning the amenities and sometimes even the deficiencies of social conventions. They often exhibited what was described as a shocking rudeness and disregard for decorum in their behaviour. Their teachings were in most part, targeted at the poor and emphasized contempt for all conventionalities (Sabine and Thorson, 1973: 136).

It is significant to note that the Cynics consist of individuals who were recruited from the ranks of foreigners and exiles and as philosophers they adopted a life of poverty on principle. For instance, the founder, Antisthenes had a Thracian mother; its most notorious member, Diogenes of Sinope, was an exile; and its most able representative,

Crates, renounced his fortune to assume a life of philosophic poverty as a wandering beggar and teacher. His wife, Hipparchia was a woman of good family who later became his pupil and partner in wandering.

The essential doctrinal kernel as espoused by the Cynics is that the wise man ought to be completely self-sufficing. By implication, it means that only things within his power, his thought and character is sufficient to lead the good of life. The Cynics abhor social discrimination that characterized the Greco-Roman polities, repudiated social inequalities in the society and consequently sought in philosophy, the entrance into a spiritual realm where such abomination would not exist.

This laid the framework upon which they extolled moral character above all other concerns. For them, every other thing with specific focus on marriage, family, property, citizenship, learning good repute as well as all the piety and conventions of a civilized life fall within the realm of indifference. For them, the rich and poor, Greek and barbarian, citizen and foreigner, freeman and slave, well-born and base-born are considered equal and reduced to the same level of indifference. This world view was a direct attack on all the essential customs that characterized traditional Greek life.

### **3.3.3 The Stoic**

The Stoic movement emerged as the fourth major Athenian school of philosophy around 300 BC, and became more pronounced during the second century after Christ. Its founder was Zeno of Citium. Other leaders of the Stoic movement after Zeno came from elsewhere particularly Asia Minor where there was a remarkable mixture of Greeks and the Orientals. At inception, Stoicism was a branch of Cynicism but Zeno broke ranks because of the crudeness and lack of decorum to which their naturalism led. For instance, to give up the distinction between the Greek and Barbarian was admissible but to substitute it with the sharp distinction between wise men and fools did not help matters.

One platform explored by the Stoics was the focus on monarchy which political philosopher of the past like Aristotle gave only an academic focus. This became necessary as monarchy began assuming great relevance in Egypt, Persia and even Macedonia and the emerging monarchies tended towards absolutism. A situation emerged in which the King was not just the Head of State but was practically identified with the state especially as the monarch proved the only cohesive force that could hold it together. Monarchy at this stage appeared to be the only form of government that could bind both the Greek and Oriental together especially as the Kings were perceived to be the symbol of unity and good government.

Stoicism which is considered a Hellenistic school propagated the theory of deification of Kings. A true king was considered divine because he brought harmony to his Kingdom as God brings harmony into the world. He was an animate law, that is, a personalized form of the principles of law and right that govern the whole universe. It was for this reason that the Stoics maintained that the King possessed a divinity which the common man did not share and which brought any unworthy usurper of a throne to disaster. The

authority of the King was therefore assumed to have moral and religious sanctions which his subjects could recognize without loss of their own moral freedom and dignity.

The ethical purpose of Stoicism like other philosophies before it was designed to produce self-sufficiency and individual well being. Their doctrine proffered a positive moral meaning for the idea of a worldwide state and universal law and eventually became the intellectual backbone for men of political, moral and religious convictions. The Stoics taught self sufficiency through rigorous training of the will; its virtues were resolution, fortitude and devotion to duty and indifference to the solicitations of pleasure. This sense of duty was however reinforced by religious teaching similar to orthodox Calvinism.

An essential kernel of the Stoic philosophy emanates from the religious conviction of oneness and perfection of nature or a true moral order. They espoused a strong belief in the overruling power of Divine Providence and that life was a duty upon which each man is to play his part well. Natural life for man they contend implies resignation to the will of God, cooperation with all the forces of good and composure of mind that comes from faith in the goodness and reasonableness of the world (Sabine; 1973: 148).

From this they posit that there is in existence, a world state, which both men and God are all citizens. This world state has a constitution which is right reason, teaching men what must be done and what must be avoided. Right reason for them, is the law of nature, the standard everywhere of what is right and just. It is unchangeable in its principles and binding on all men whether ruler or subject. It is the law of God.

The Stoics posit that there are two laws for every man, the law of his city and the law of the world city. Put differently, the law of his custom and the law of reason. The second for them is superior and should have greater authority and consequently must provide a norm to which the statutes of customs and cities should conform. They further argue that customs are varied while that reason is one and that behind every variety of customs there ought to be some unity of purpose. This gave rise to the belief in a worldwide system of law that has many branches. Evidently, while Stoicism tended to diminish the importance of social distinction between individuals, it tended to promote harmony between states.

The ideas propagated by the Stoic movement made a strong appeal on the educated Romans of the era and proved a medium through which Greek philosophy exerted significant influence in the formative stage of the Roman empire. For instance, the notion of divinity and deification of Kings which was integrated into Greek customs was adopted by the Roman emperors.



### Self-Assessment Exercises 1

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *Which of the following defined happiness as the avoidance of pain, worry and anxiety?*
  - A. *The Stoics*
  - B. *The Pericles*
  - C. *The Epicureans*
  - D. *The Utilitarians*
2. *The \_\_\_ consist of individuals who were recruited from the ranks of foreigners and exiles and as philosophers they adopted a life of poverty on principle.*
  - A. *Cynics*
  - B. *Aliens*
  - C. *Stoics*
  - D. *Socrates*
3. *The core idea of the \_\_\_ philosophy emanates from the religious conviction of oneness and perfection of nature or a true moral order.*
  - A. *Indian*
  - B. *Latin*
  - C. *Greek*
  - D. *Stoic*



### 3.4 Summary

This unit identified the major movements whose ideas gained increasing currency towards the end of the Greeco-Roman era. Prominent among them include the epicurean philosophy, the stoic movement and the cynics. The epicureans sought to inculcate in their students a sense of individual self sufficiency. They extolled the pursuit of the good of life characterized by the enjoyment of pleasure and avoidance of pain.

The Cynics on their part propagated a protest against the city state and the social formation upon which it was based. Consequently, they expressed contempt for all conventionalities. In addition, the Cynics shared the passion of the epicureans on self sufficiency. The stoics on their part focused on the monarchy and subsequently propagated a deification of the kings because they were assumed to bring harmony to their kingdoms.



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### 3.6 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

#### Answer to SAEs 1

1. C
2. A
3. D

## Unit 4: Marcus Tullius Cicero

### Unit Structure

- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Learning Outcomes
- 4.3. Marcus Tullius Cicero
  - 4.3.1. The Live of Cicero
  - 4.3.2. Cicero's View of Law
  - 4.3.3. Cicero's View of the State
- 4.4. Summary
- 4.5. References/Further Readings



#### 4.1 Introduction

The focus of this unit is on the political thoughts of Marcus Cicero. It is remarkable to note that the writings of this philosopher had remarkable impact on the political ideals of his era. While it is accepted that Cicero apparently lacked originality in much of his work, it is noteworthy to credit him with the fact that his ideas were open to public consumption.



#### 4.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the main highlights of Cicero's political theory
- Explain the contributions of Marcus Cicero to political theory.



#### 4.3. The Political Philosophy of Marcus Tullius Cicero

##### 4.3.1. The Live of Cicero (106-43 BC)

Marcus Cicero is one of the outstanding statesmen and orators of the Roman Empire. He was born in Arpinum under Rome and got influenced by the works of Plato and Aristotle. He defended the Roman constitution against the autocracy of his time. Consequently, his works, which represented a form of Stoicism, were preserved for the reading public at all future times. One remarkable fact about the work of Cicero is that they were merely compilations of previous works and as such had little originality. However, the merit of his writings is based on the fact that they were widely read.

It is also significant to note that the wide acceptability of Cicero's works to the political authority in his time made it possible for accessibility to even future generations. Essentially, his political writings formed the main source of information on the form of Stoicism which Panaetius introduced to the Roman public. His outstanding political

works include such political treatises like *De Re Publica- The Republic* 51 BC and *De Legibus- The Law* represents credible indexes of the political thoughts of Rome especially in conservative and aristocratic circles during the last days of the Republic.

Sabine and Thorson (1973) posit the ideas and significance of Cicero's works are better appreciated through an understanding of the immediate purpose and the long time influence that he exerted. They described the moral purpose for which Cicero wrote his treatises was to commend the traditional Roman virtue of public service and the preeminence of the statesman's career, enlightening and harmonizing these with a tincture of Greek philosophy. Politically, his works were designed to restore the Republican constitution in the form it was before the revolutionary tribunate of Tiberus Gracchus.

#### **4.3.2. Cicero's View of Law**

Cicero contends that the natural law of reason is the basis of all other laws and that its source is divine wisdom and reason that directs the entire universe. The state and its laws are always subject to the law of God, or the moral and natural law, that is, the higher rule of right which transcends human choice and human institutions. It is from this source that even the rules of nations which demands righteousness and deter from doing evil, and also other particular laws written and unwritten draw their power. The primal law for Cicero is the divine right reason of Supreme Jupiter (Roman god), powerful to establish right and wrong. Consequently, he argued that good and truth must be eternal since they originate from divine source.

Cicero emphasized the existence of a universal law of nature which has its origin in God's providential government of the world as well as the rational and social nature of man which make them akin to God. In this law lies the constitution of the universal-state. The universal law in the views of Cicero is the same everywhere and is unchangeably binding on all men irrespective of nationality. He insists that any legislation that contravenes the universal law is not entitled to be described as law because no ruler or people can invalidate it. This is the true law which in his view is *right reason*. In his words:

There is in fact a true law- namely, right reason, which is in accordance with nature, applies to all men, and is unchangeable and eternal. By its commands this law summons men to the performance of their duties; by its prohibitions it restrains them from doing wrong. Its commands and prohibitions always influence good men, but are without effect upon the bad. To invalidate this law by human legislation is never morally right, nor is it permissible ever to restrict its operation, and to annul it wholly is impossible. Neither the senate nor the people can absolve us from our obligation to obey this law, and it requires no Sextus Aelius to expound and interpret it. It will not lay down one rule today and another tomorrow.

But there will be one law, eternal and unchangeable, binding at all times upon all peoples; and there will be as it were, one common master and ruler of men, namely God, who is the author of this law, its interpreter and its sponsor. The man who will not obey it will abandon his better self, and in denying the true nature of man, will thereby suffer the severest of penalties though he has escaped all the other consequences which men call punishment. (Republic III, 22 translated by Sabine and Smith)

Cicero further contends that by definition, laws have the inherent quality of truth and justice. As such the laws of the state must also be just and true to deserve being termed as law and that such law must protect the citizens and the state as well as safeguard the tranquility of human life. He further described true law as right reason in agreement with nature.

This law is of unchanging, everlasting and of universal application. The true law applies command to summon duty and often averts wrong doing by its prohibitions. Cicero further contends that it will be sin to seek to alter this law or even to repeal any part of it and is impossible to attempt to abolish it entirely. There exist no interpreter of this law but us and there is no way we can even be freed from it by the legislature.

The universality of this law implies that there will be no different law in Rome and Athens now and in the future. Rather what are in existence is one eternal and unchangeable law that will be valid for all nations, and at all times and one God for us all who is the originator, promulgator and enforcing judge of this law. He further maintained that we cannot consider the oppressive rules of some nations as true laws since they are based on the selfish principles of human nature and lack the basic qualities of divine wisdom. This is because all particular laws and rules draw their qualities from the primal law of nature else they do not oblige.

Cicero further maintained that a state without laws cannot be considered a true state because law is the greatest good of the state. He further contends in the most unequivocal terms, that in the light of the eternal law, that all men are equal. This for him do not imply that they are equal in learning and does not suggest that the state should seek to equalize their property, rather it implies that they are equal in the possession of reason, their underlying psychological make-up and in general attitude towards what they believe to be honourable or base. It is his position that inequality in the society is nothing but error and the product of bad habit and false opinion. Consequently, he argued that all men and all races of men possess the same capacity for experience and for the same kind of experience, and are equally capable of discriminating between right and wrong.

Furthermore, he insists that since all men are subject to one law, they are equal. This in his view is because equality is a moral requirement which suggests that some measure of human dignity and respect be accorded to every individual since we all are members of the great human brotherhood. This logic suggest that even the slave shares in this doctrine of equality since he is not just a living tool of the master rather a wage earner hired for life. Kant clarified this when he asserted that the individual should be treated as an end not just as a means.

Law for Cicero is therefore, the natural force, that is, the mind and reason with which the intelligent man measures justice and injustice. This presupposes that justice has its roots in nature which is governed by reason of the immortal gods. Cicero also contends that man share of right reason, which is law, is common with the divine. It is his opinion that sharing law also implies sharing justice in common. Force to him, is therefore merely an accident in the nature of the state and it is justified only because it is required to give effect to the principles of justice and right. From this, he posits that all possessing these three qualities and obeying the same system of law, in common, gods and men, belong to a single *Commonwealth*.

#### **4.3.3. Cicero's Views of the State**

Cicero associated the origin of the state with man's natural gift of social spirit which draws him always to partnership. A state in his view cannot exist permanently or in any form except a crippled condition, unless it depends upon or acknowledges the consciousness of mutual obligation and the mutual recognition of rights that bind its citizens together. It is therefore seen as a moral community, a group of persons who in common possess the state and its laws. Such a community represents an association of a good number of people based on justice and partnership to secure common good. It is based on this that he described political governance as *res populi* or the *res publica*, meaning "the affairs of the state" or "Commonwealth." He extended this logic further by insisting that unless a state retains its nature as a community for ethical purposes held together by common ties, it is nothing but what was later described by St. Augustine as "highway robbery on a large scale." It is on this basis that he observed that the Commonwealth is the people's affair; and the people is not every group of men, associated in any manner, but is 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 he therefore argued is a corporate body whose membership is in the possession of all citizens and supplies its members with the advantages of mutual aid and just government. As such, its authority arises from the collective power of the people and political power when rightly exercised, is nothing but the corporate power of the people. From this, he argued that the state cannot exist permanently except it depends upon, acknowledges or gives effects to the consciousness of mutual

obligations and recognition of rights that bind its citizens together. It flows from the above that the state and its law in the purest sense is always subject to the moral and natural law which flows from God. This law transcends human choice and institutions (Sabine and Thorson, 1973).

Writing on the best form of government, Cicero exhibited faith in the Polybian Cycle that is a belief in the excellence of a mixed constitution evolved from the historical cycle of constitutions as expressed by Polybius. The Polybian cycle was a representation of the orderly alternation of good and bad constitutions, from monarchy to tyranny, from tyranny to aristocracy, from aristocracy to oligarchy, from oligarchy to moderate democracy and from democracy to mob rule.

Cicero's thesis revolved on the emergence of a perfect state based on mixed constitutions whose principle will evolve from the historical development of Roman constitutions. His logic is drawn from the fact that this constitution was contributed by many minds working under diverse circumstances and embodying piecemeal solutions of various political problems as they emerged. From this, he maintained that the Roman constitution was the stable and perfect form of government that has ever evolved.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *The wide acceptability of Cicero's works to the \_\_\_\_ in his time made it possible for accessibility to even future generations.*
  - A. *Church authority*
  - B. *Political authority*
  - C. *The masses*
  - D. *The elites*
2. *Which of the following is in the views of Cicero the same everywhere and is unchangeably binding on all men irrespective of nationality?*
  - A. *Law of the space*
  - B. *Humanitarian law*
  - C. *International law*
  - D. *Universal law*
3. *Which of the following Cicero argued is a corporate body whose membership is in the possession of all citizens and supplies its members with the advantages of mutual aid and just government?*
  - A. *The State*
  - B. *The Nation*
  - C. *Corporate Enterprise*
  - D. *The Law*



#### 4.4 Summary

Marcus Cicero had remarkable influence on the nature of law in Romans society. His ideas on the Polybian Cycle explained the various forms of governments and how they alternate to evolve a desirable pattern for political governance in the society.



#### 4.5 References/Further Readings

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#### 4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

##### Answer to SAEs 1

1. B
2. D
3. A



<b>Module 3</b>	<b>The State and the Church</b>
Unit 1	Seneca and the Christian Fathers
Unit 2	St. Augustine
Unit 3	St. Thomas Aquinas
Unit 4	Marsiglio of Padua

## **Unit 1: Seneca and the Christian Fathers**

### **Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 The Teachings of Seneca and other Christian Fathers
  - 1.3.1 Basic Teachings of Seneca
  - 1.3.2 Christian Obedience
  - 1.3.3 St. Ambrose
  - 1.3.4 St. Gregory
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Reading



#### **1.1 Introduction**

A major feature of the trend in political theory during the medieval era was the contestations between the church and the state. Consequently, the underlying theme in the nature of political theories in this era was aimed at addressing this controversy. Seneca is one of the philosophers who made significant impact to influence the nature of political thought in this era. This unit therefore explores the ideas of Seneca and how his doctrine was perceived in political history. The ideas expressed by Saints Ambrose and Gregory were also discussed. The central thrust of the discussion bothers on the delineation of boundaries between the state and the church.



#### **1.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the nature and contents of Seneca's ideas
- Highlight Seneca's contributions to political theory
- Discuss the ideas of St. Ambrose
- Discuss the ideas of St. Gregory



#### **1.3 The Teachings of Seneca and other Christian Fathers**

### **1.3.1. M Basic Teachings of Seneca**

The well centralized system of authority presented in the Roman law reflects not only administrative unity of the empire but also the ancient conviction that the state is supreme among human institutions. In this tradition, there was no thought of a divided allegiance in which another loyalty will compete with the claim of civic duty and not evident gulf between the City of God and the earthly city.

There exist some similarities and distinction between the ideas of Cicero and Seneca especially as it concerns the ability of statesmen to deal with social problems. First, both men shared an eclectic stoicism which nature represented and a standard of goodness and reasonableness. They also described the great age of the Republic as a time when Rome achieved her political maturity and afterwards decline into senility, corruption and despotism. Their point of departure however rest on the fact that whereas Cicero held the illusion that this era may be recaptured, Seneca expressed pessimism and despondency insisting that the era of illusion was over. Furthermore Seneca like Cicero, rejected the Epicurean pursuit of private satisfaction sought by the neglect of public interests.

In the view of Seneca, dependency on a despot was preferable to dependency on the people because the mass of men is so vicious and corrupt that it is more merciless than a tyrant. He argued that a political career has little to offer the good man except the annihilation of his goodness. As such, he contended that a good man has little to do for his fellows by holding political office. He however envisaged a social service which involved no function of a political sort and maintained that it was the moral duty of the good man to offer his service in this capacity. This is another turn to the Stoic doctrine that every man is a member of two commonwealths- the civil state of which he is subject and the greater state composed of all rational beings to which he belongs by virtue of his humanity.

Seneca further noted that the greater commonwealth is a society rather than a state. This commonwealth is bound more by morals and religion than by legal or political ties. As such, the wise and good man renders service to the society even though he has no political power. This service is rendered by virtue of his moral relations to his fellow men as well as through philosophical contemplation. In his view, the man who by virtue of his thought, become a teacher of mankind, fills a place at once nobler and more influential than the political ruler. Likewise, Seneca considers the worship of God as another truly human service (Sabine and Thorson, 1973: 172).

It is significant to note that Seneca expressed his ideas in an age when the growing need of spiritual consolation extolled religion above secular interests and as the only means of contact with a higher range of realities. Furthermore, the essentially secular unity of life was breaking down and religion was achieving its independence beside and even above the life of the state. The growing influence and interest of religion became embodied in the institution of the Church which now began to lay claim to the loyalty of the individual.

Seneca was conscious of the inherent sin and misery in human nature. He posited that human wickedness is ineradicable and continually haunts the individual as no one escapes it. From this he added that virtue consist of the struggle for salvation. As such, his ethics placed high premium on human sympathy and gentleness and reveals a tendency towards humanitarianism. These virtues are consistent with the Stoic tradition.

Seneca rejected the ancient belief that the state is the highest agency of moral perfection. He had a glowing account of the Golden Age which in his view preceded the Age of Civilization. He argued that in the Golden Age, men were still happy and innocent; they loved a simple life without the superfluities and luxuries of civilization. They were not indeed either wise or morally perfect for their goodness resulted rather from the innocence of ignorance than from practiced virtue. In Seneca's state of nature, men have not yet acquired that great agency of greed, the institution of private property. For him, it was the growth of avarice that destroyed the condition of primitive purity.

He further contended that so long as men remained pure, they had no need for government or law; they obeyed voluntarily the wisest and best men, who sought no advantage of their own in ruling over their fellows. Unfortunately, the advancement in art brought with it luxury and corruption and men and rulers became self seeking and tyrants respectively. Consequently, law and coercion became inevitable and government became the necessary remedy for wickedness (Sabine and Thorson; 1973).

Seneca's doctrine of Golden Age was derived from the haunting sense of decay in the Roman society of Nero's reign. His conception of law as a mere cure for sin is at variance with the Utopian notion of law as true philosophy while his belief in a primitive condition of purity is implied in the Christian notion of the fall of man. Furthermore, his insistence that private property did not exist in the state of nature tallies more appropriately with the condition of communism but is disputed by lawyers who insist that ownership of property is in accord with natural law. Such a view became pronounced following the doctrine that poverty was morally superior to riches and monasticism to a secular life.

It needs be highlighted here that Seneca's doctrine in no sense suggests a subversive attack on the private property, law or the existence of government. Rather, it implies that these institutions represent at best, an ethical second-best which will not be required in a perfect society characterized by purified human nature in place. The logic which Seneca seems to advance is that law and government backed by coercion are the divinely appointed means for ruling mankind in its fallen nature. Based on this, he posits that the government has an indivisible claim to obedience and loyalty.

Seneca's emphasis on the existence of government as a remedy for human evil reflects an enormous shift in moral opinion from the orthodoxy set by Greek political philosophers on political institutions. For instance, Aristotle expressed the opinion that the city state is the necessary condition for civilized life and the only means for bringing human faculties to their highest form of development. On the contrary, Seneca extolled

the existence of a coercive power that struggle ineffectually to make earthly life tolerable as a substitute for the state as a positive agency of human perfection. It is this trend in Seneca's writing that influenced the political philosophy of the Christian fathers.

### **1.3.2. Christian Obedience**

It has sometimes been argued that the rise of the Christian church as a distinct institution entitled to govern the spiritual concerns of mankind and independent of the state is the most revolutionary incident in the history of Western Europe, as it concerns politics and political philosophy. This is because, while it is accepted that Christianity is a doctrine of salvation which emphasized the providential government of the world, the obligation of law and government to do substantial justice and the equality of all men in the sight of God, certain ideas espoused by the Christian fathers had bearing on the functioning and processes of the society. For instance, in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians, he denounced difference of race and social position when he observed that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Jesus Christ." Similarly, in a letter to the Romans asserting the universal law inherent in all human beings in relation to the Jewish law, Paul observed that "For when the Gentiles, which have no law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves."

The obligation of the Christian to respect secular authorities was recognized by Christ when he unequivocally told the Pharisee to "render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." St. Paul extended this further in another letter to the Romans where he cautioned against the anarchical tendencies that existed in the early Christian communities. Specifically, St. Paul made the following pronouncements:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power resists the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not terrors to good works, but to the evil (Romans 13 vs 1-3a).

The above clearly demonstrates that St. Paul and Seneca share the view that the main power of the magistrate is the necessary consequence of human sin; the rulers work is to repress evil and encourage good. However, in the event where there exist conflict between the temporal authority and the authority of God, the individual should obey the authority of God instead.

### **1.3.3. St. Ambrose**

Christian Fathers like St. Ambrose were especially uncompromising in issues relating to the autonomy of the church in spiritual matters. This uncompromising posture made him a source of reference for other Christians in later controversies on the issue. Specifically, he declared unequivocally that in spiritual matters, the church had jurisdiction over all Christians, the emperor included, for the emperor like every other Christian is a son of the church; he is within the church, not above it (Carlyle cited in Sabine and Thorson, 1973). In a letter to Emperor Valentinian, St. Ambrose clearly

stated that it was the bishops that will judge the Christian emperors, not the emperors to judge the Bishops.

It is significant to note that St. Ambrose did not in any way question the duty of obedience to civil authority but he affirmed that it was not only the right but the duty of a priest to reprove secular rulers in matters of morals, a precept which he not only taught but also practiced. He once refused to celebrate the Eucharist in the presence of Emperor Theodosius because of his guilt in causing a massacre in Thessalonica. In another case, he withheld the celebration of the Eucharist until the emperor withdrew an order which St. Ambrose considered injurious to the privileges of a Bishop. Similarly, he at another incident refused to surrender a church for the use of Arians upon the order of the Emperor Valentinian. St. Ambrose specifically argued that the palaces belong to the Emperor while the churches belonged to the Bishop. He however admitted the authority of the Emperor over secular property including the lands of the church but maintained that the church building which has been dedicated to spiritual use is beyond the authority of the Emperor.

It is significant to observe that St. Ambrose unequivocally repudiated any right to rebel or resist with force the execution of the emperor's orders. He will rather argue and implore but will not incite the people to rebellion. His position remained that whereas the secular ruler is subject to the church's instruction in spiritual matters and his authority over ecclesiastical property is limited, the rights of the church is to be maintained by spiritual means rather than by resistance.

#### **1.3.4 St. Gregory**

Another Christian Father that made remarkable contribution to the doctrine of the state and church is St. Gregory. In his views, a wicked King is also entitled to obedience. Writing in his *Pastoral Rule*, he maintained that the subjects must obey the rulers and in addition, they must not judge or criticize the lives of their rulers. Specifically, he unequivocally declared that:

For indeed the acts of rulers are not to be smitten with the sword of the mouth, even though they are rightly judged to be blameworthy. But if ever, even in the least, the tongue slips into censure of them, the heart must needs be bowed down by the affliction of penitence, to the end that it may return to itself, and, when it has offended against the power set over it, may dread the judgment of him by whom the power was set over it. (See Carlyle cited in Sabine and Thorson, 1973).

One remarkable difference between St. Gregory and St. Ambrose is that whereas Ambrose protested and refused to obey some orders of the emperor he considered inconsistent with the Church, St. Gregory may protest against acts that he considered inconsistent with the canon law, but he will not refuse to obey. His position was that the Emperor had power to also do what that was considered unlawful so long as he accepts to risk the damnation.

One underlying fact about the position of the Christian thinkers of the era is their belief in the dual organisation and control of human society in the interest of the church and the state. Consequently, they stressed the preservation of eternal salvation and spiritual interests in the domain of the church while temporal and secular interests including the maintenance of peace and order remains the preserve of the state. It is their belief that a spirit of mutuality ought to prevail between both orders with each respecting the right which God had ordained for the other.

The ensuing debate between the contending authorities of the church and the state is described as the *Doctrine of the Two Swords*. The essential doctrinal basis of St. Gregory is the accommodation of a society under dual control, presided over by the twin hierarchies of the church and the state, each with distinguishable jurisdictions. This doctrine received its authoritative expression from Pope Gelasius I when the rivalry between the Pope and the Emperor made the relation between the spiritual and the temporal a matter of controversy. In his letter to the emperor in Constantinople, Pope Gelasius I advocated that in doctrinal matters, the emperor must subordinate his will to the clergy and must learn rather than presume to teach. This implied that the church and its officials must exercise jurisdiction over all ecclesiastical matters as this is the only way through which it can exert its independence as a self governing institution.

The doctrine rejected and described the combination of spiritual and secular authority in the same individual or institution as pagan tradition. This is because under the Christian dispensation, it is unlawful for the same man to be both king and priest. Emphasis was rather placed on the fact that Christian emperors need the clergy for the sake of eternal life while the clergy require imperial regulations to order the course of temporal affairs.

It is also remarkable to note that the Christian Fathers conceived the church as a universal empire in which mankind formed a single society under two governments characterised by separate laws, systems of administration and spheres of rights. Consequently, the Christian was placed between two separate laws and separate administration.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *Which of the following is a greater commonwealth according to Seneca?*
  - A. *A society*
  - B. *A state*
  - C. *A nation*
  - D. *A community*
2. *According to the Christian fathers, in the event where there exist conflict between the temporal authority and the authority of God, the individual should obey the \_\_\_ instead.*
  - A. *Temporal authority*
  - B. *Authority of God*
  - C. *Judicial pronouncement*

- D. Act of parliament
3. According to St. Ambrose, while the palaces belong to the Emperor, the churches belonged to the \_\_\_\_\_
- A. Bishop
  - B. Congregants
  - C. Worshippers
  - D. Celestial beings
4. Which of the following persons may protest against acts that he considered inconsistent with the canon law, but will not refuse to obey?
- A. St. Thomas Aquinas
  - B. St. Andrews
  - C. St. Gregory
  - D. St. Ambrose



#### 1.4 Summary

This unit explored Seneca's views and how this was perceived and later extended by some Christian fathers in the era. Specifically, the contributions of St. Ambrose and St. Gregory on the controversy between papal and secular authorities were highlighted. It is noteworthy to emphasize that this unit gives a good beginning to the unfolding debate over the question of supremacy between the church and the state.



#### 1.5 References/Further Readings

Mukhi, HR. (2007). *History of Western Political Thought*. New Delhi: SBD Publishers.

Sabine, H. G. and Thorson, L. T. (1973). *A History of Political Thought*. Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden.



#### 1.6 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

##### Answers to SAEs 1

- 1. A
- 2. B
- 3. A
- 4. C

## Unit 2: St. Augustine

### Unit Structure

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Learning Outcomes
- 2.3. The Life and Teachings of St. Augustine
  - 2.3.1. The Life and Times of St. Augustine
  - 2.3.2. St. Augustine's Doctrine of Two Cities
  - 2.3.3. The Relationship between the Church and the State
- 2.4. Summary
- 2.5. References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 2.6. Possible Answers to Self Assessment Exercises



### 2.1 Introduction

This unit examines the life and political ideas of St. Aurelius Augustine. Specifically, attempt is made here to identify the main contents of his teaching as expressed in the doctrine of two cities. Other issues which are treated in this unit focus on the so-called limits of political obligation and the contention on the spheres of supremacy between the church and the state.



### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss St. Augustine's doctrine of two cities
- Narrate St. Augustine's analysis of the relationship between the church and the state.



### 2.3 The Life and Teachings of St. Augustine

#### 2.3.1 Life and Times of St. Augustine (354-430)

St Aurelius Augustine was a great convert and pupil of St. Ambrose. Often described as the Bishop of Hippo, St Augustine's philosophy was only in a slight degree systematic while his mind encompassed most of the learning of ancient times which was transmitted through him, to the Middle-Ages. He wrote *City of God* to defend Christianity against the pagan charge that it was responsible for the decline of Roman greatness and power and specifically for causing the sack of the city of Alaric in 410. In the book, St. Augustine restated the notion that man is a citizen of two cities- the earthly city and the city of God. This flows from the belief that man's nature is two-fold; he is body and spirit and therefore a citizen of this world and the heavenly city at the same time. It is his view that a fundamental fact of human life is the division of human interest, the worldly interests that centre on the body and the other interest that centre on the soul which belongs to the City of God (Sabine and Thorson, 1973).



St. Augustine (also referred as Blessed Augustine) was born in Tagaste in Algeria, North Africa to a Christian mother, St. Monica and a father who remained steadfast to his traditional religion till later years in life. He resented his mother's plea to convert to Christianity and rather preferred to romanticize with the many seductions of his era, particularly the Great Philosophies of men, the licentiousness of other students, the theatres, the intoxication of his literary success, and a proud desire to be always first, even in evil. He however converted to Christianity in 387 AD. By 391 AD, he was ordained a Priest and later Bishop of Hippo in 396 AD, a position he occupied until his death.

Aurelius Augustine studied Rhetoric at Carthage and eventually worked as a teacher with it while in Carthage, Milan and Rome. He also read the works of Cicero, the Manichaeans, Skeptics and later the neo-Platonists. These experiences exposed him to questions of philosophy and trained his mind in curiosity. He was a very prolific writer and some of his works include *Confessions* and *De Civitas Dei (On the City of God)*, *On the Trinity*; *On Faith, and Love* and *On Christian Doctrine*. His other writings include his polemic attacks on various heresies such as *Against Faustus, the Manichean*; *On Baptism*; *Against the Donatists*.

The *City of God* which was inspired by the fall of Rome to the Visigoths in 410, focused on a study of the relationship between Christianity and secular religion. This is because the collapse of Rome shook the faith of many Christians. This explains his logic that The Church was the spiritual domain of the City of God (Civitas Dei) distinct from the City of Man (Civitas Terrena). This logic significantly influenced the prevailing world view of the Middle-Ages.

St. Augustine taught grace and salvation but opposed such heresies as propagated under Pelagianism that individuals have the ability to choose to be good to such a degree as to merit salvation without divine aid. He also framed such concepts like *original sin* and *just war*. He remains a Saint, a Doctor of the Church and the Patron of the Augustinian religious order in the Roman Catholic and Anglican Communion. He is ascribed a significant place in the doctrine of orthodox Calvinism as one of the theological fathers of Reformation while the Eastern Orthodox Church celebrate his feast on 15 June. He remains till date one of the most influential figures in the development of the Western Church.

### **2.3.2 St. Augustine's Doctrine of Two Cities**

In his work, *Civitas Dei*, St Augustine identified two Kingdoms which correspond to heavenly Kingdom or Civitas Dei, represented on earth by the Church and the Civitas Terrena or earthly city represented by the Holy Roman Empire. This doctrine became relevant to allay the fears of many Christian whose faith were severely shaken by the defeat and overthrow of the Roman Empire. His principal logic was that the entire humanity is one but divided into these two cities as identified by those who abide by the earthly principles and others living in accordance with the principles of the divine.

St. Augustine distinguished between the two cities. He described the earthly city as founded on the earthly, appetitive and possessive impulses of the lower human nature. This refers to the kingdom of Satan and has its history in the disobedience of the Angels and embodying itself in the pagan empires of Assyria and Rome. The other is the City of God, the society founded in the hope of heavenly peace and spiritual salvation. It is the kingdom of Christ which embodies itself first in the Hebrew nation and later the Church and the Christianized Empire. He contends that history is replete with the struggle between these two cities and of ultimate mastery which must fall to the City of God. He insists that eternity or permanence and peace is possible only in the City of God. This is because all earthly or temporal powers must pass away because such powers are naturally mutable and unstable and are often built on aspects of human nature which necessarily issue in war and the greed of domination. He used this logic to explain the fall of Rome. It must however be noted that St. Augustine did not equate the Church as the City of God. Rather, the Church remains an institution that propels and prepares men for the reward of that glorious city.

St. Augustine ascribed divinity to the heavenly city which he described as the true society, a universal commonwealth ordained by God from creation. It is a city reserved for those that love and worship God and to whom God's grace is bestowed. The membership of Civitas Dei is unlimited by race, class, territory or any other form of boundaries. They enjoy community with God and with one another. It has a broader membership which includes the angels and dead elect and the living who through sacrament of the Church have won the Grace of God. The City of God based on justice is the true Commonwealth.

In his interpretation of man's quest for happiness, Aurelius Augustine maintained that the two great ends that determine man's action in life are the Supreme Good for which other things are desired and Supreme Evil which is the final end to which harmful effects of evil lead. He insists that it is the desire to locate these great ends that propel all quests for wisdom and attempts have been made to locate these ends in the soul, body and the soul and body together. St. Augustine associated the foundation of Supreme Good in the City of God. He argued that men desire joy and peace and that even in war, the ultimate desire is to attain peace.

Perfect peace for him is only attainable in the City of God where Supreme Good is everlasting. He distinguished it from the peace which men pass through in their mortal state as the perfect peace of the City of God experience no adversity and remains unto immortality. He argued that in the earthly city, Civitas Terrena, peace involves a concord between men in ordered relation with one another. However, in the City of God, the eternal peace prevails and it manifest as harmonious fellowship in the enjoyment of God.

Writing on slavery, Augustine identified two levels of slavery which are *slavery to sin* and *slavery of one man to another*. He argued that all men including slave owners are in the bondage of slavery. His logic is that beside physical slavery, the slave owners are in themselves slaves to lust, pride and greed. It is his opinion that it is much more

beneficial to be slaves to human beings than to lust which is the more pitiless domination.

### **2.3.3. On the Relationship between the Church and the State**

Man, he maintains is called to the universal and eternal society guided by the universal state's relative law. He is called to a higher order; the Celestial Society, that is neither limited by time nor national or political boundaries. From this, he maintained that the Christian has to respect and obey the secular powers of course with a spirit of one destined to a higher city. This obedience to the earthly powers must be limited to the secular affairs since the heavenly city the celestial society, cuts across languages and nation and never respecting the temporal laws that are against true religion.

St. Augustine stands as a powerful advocate for orthodoxy and of the episcopacy as the sole means for the dispensing of saving grace. It is his position that unless the state is a community for ethical purposes and unless it is held together by moral ties, it is nothing except highway robbery on a large scale. In the light of later scholarship, Augustine can be seen to serve as a bridge between the ancient and medieval worlds. A review of his life and work, however, shows him as an active mind engaging the practical concerns of the churches he served.

It is significant to understand that the political ideas of St. Augustine like that of some other Christian Fathers emphasise the autonomy of the Church in spiritual matters and the belief that government is shared between the royalty and the clerics. The apparent interpretation is that both the church and the secular order are independent as long as each act within the sphere of its jurisdiction. This ensures that no party encroaches on the sphere of the other's jurisdiction.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *According to St. Augustine man is a citizen of \_\_\_\_*
  - A. *One city*
  - B. *Two cities*
  - C. *Two countries*
  - D. *Two kingdoms*
2. *St. Augustine ascribed divinity to the heavenly \_\_\_\_ which he described as the true society, a universal commonwealth ordained by God from creation.*
  - A. *City*
  - B. *Jerusalem*
  - C. *Throne*
  - D. *Church*
3. *What do the political ideas of St. Augustine place emphasis on with respect to the church on spiritual matters?*
  - A. *Obedience*
  - B. *Indifference*
  - C. *Neutrality*



#### 2.4 Summary

This unit explored the teachings of St Augustine. One central fact is his insistence that the individual should obey the state with the mind of one destined to a higher life. By implication, he shares the view that political obedience is to be sustained so long as it does not breach the values of that higher order which is found in the Civitas Dei. This has been sometimes interpreted to imply that the state supremacy should be restricted to secular matters.



#### 2.5. References/Further Readings

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#### 2.6. Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

##### Answer to SAEs 1

1. B
2. A
3. D

## **Unit 3: St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)**

### **Unit Structure**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 St. Thomas Aquinas
  - 3.3.1. Life and times of St. Thomas Aquinas
  - 3.3.2. Basic Works of St. Thomas Aquinas
  - 3.3.3. St. Aquinas and the Nature of Law
  - 3.3.4. St. Aquinas on the Church and State
- 3.4. Summary
- 3.5. References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 3.6. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises



### **3.1 Introduction**

This unit examines the contributions of St. Thomas Aquinas to political thought. Specifically, attempts are made to examine the life and times of St. Aquinas and how these influenced his political writings. Similarly, efforts were made to expose the student to St. Thomas notion and classification of laws and how these are linked to the contention between temporal and spiritual authorities on issues of supremacy.



### **3.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the political ideas of St. Aquinas
- Narrate the views and issues addressed by St. Aquinas
- Examine the contentions on the relationship between the church and the state.



### **3.3. St. Thomas Aquinas**

#### **3.3.1. Life and times of St. Thomas Aquinas**

St. Thomas Aquinas sometimes called the Angelic Doctor and the Prince of Scholastics was born in the Italian city of Roccasecca, near Naples. He joined the Dominican Order against the wishes of his mother at the age of sixteen and studied under Albertus Agnus (Albert the Great). He was educated at the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino and at the University of Naples. He was greatly influenced by the teachings of Aristotle and remains till date a leading Roman Catholic theologian and one of the finest scholars in medieval philosophy.

He was ordained a priest in 1250 and began to teach at the University of Paris in 1252. In 1256, he was awarded a doctorate degree in theology and appointed professor of philosophy by the University. He was summoned to Rome in 1259 by Pope Alexander IV where he worked as adviser and teacher in the Papal court. St Aquinas returned to Paris in 1268 where he engaged Siger de Brabant and the followers of Averroes in series of controversies because of the threats it posed to the integrity and supremacy of Roman Catholic doctrine.

Aquinas left Paris for Naples in 1272 where he established a new Dominican School. He was commissioned to the Council of Lyon by Pope Gregory X in March 1274 but died shortly after. He was canonized by Pope John XXII in 1323 while Pope Pius V proclaimed him the Doctor of the Church in 1567. His remains were laid to rest at the Cistercian monastery of Fossanova. Some of his major writings include *Summa Theologica (Treatise on Law)*, *De Regimine Principum (Treatise on Prudence and Justice)* and *De Regno (On Kingship)*.

It is significant to observe that the work of St. Thomas Aquinas was crucial to the acceptance of the philosophy of Aristotle and its ascendancy as a cornerstone of Roman Catholic philosophy. This is because the ideas of Aristotle were initially treated with dismay and skepticism as bearing the stigma of infidelity. At this stage, the church was more inclined to ban such ideas. Similarly, the philosophy of Aristotle was forbidden at the University of Paris till 1210. He derived much of his forms of government from Aristotle's *Politics* and focused his interest on the moral limitations placed on the rulers. (Sabine and Thorson, 1973)

### **3.3.2. Basic Works of St. Thomas Aquinas**

St. Thomas conception of social and political life falls directly into his larger plan of nature. He conceived the society as a system of ends and purposes in which the lower serves the higher while the higher directs and guides the lower. Like Aristotle, he described the society as a mutual exchange of services for the sake of a good life to which many callings contribute. For instance, the farmer and artisan supplies material goods while the priest supply his prayers and religious observance. He argued that the common good require that such a system shall have a ruling part just as the soul rules the body or any higher nature rules the lower. From this he posits that leadership is simply an office of trust for the whole community. The ruler's action and deed is therefore justified because he contributes to the social pool of good like any other member of the society.

The duty of the leader therefore is the happy ordering of human life. His power is derived from God and is considered a ministry or service owed to the community of which he is the head. In this lies the moral purpose of government. It is the duty of the

leader to direct the actions of every class in the state that men may live a happy and virtuous life, which is the true end of man in society. It is expected that this will outlive man's sojourn on earth to his celebration of his heavenly bliss. It is at this point that St. Aquinas maintain that the enjoyment of the heavenly bliss is beyond human power and rest in the keeping of the priest rather than of the secular authorities.

St Aquinas also insist that the orderly organisation of political life is a contributing factor to man's attainment of his ultimate end; the enjoyment of the heavenly. Consequently, he contends that it is the duty of the temporal authority to put in place the foundations of human happiness by maintaining peace and order, to preserve it by seeing that all the services of governance that address the needs of the society and remove the obstacles to the enjoyment of the good of life are in place.

St Aquinas rejected tyranny and maintained that the moral purpose for which political rule exists implies that authority should be limited and exercised in accordance with the stipulations of the law. He argued further that justifiable resistance is a public act of a whole people and that those who resist must be responsible to ensure that their actions are less injurious to the general good than the abuse which they are resisting. He however described sedition as a deadly sin but insists that justifiable resistance is not tantamount to resistance.

St Aquinas was explicit on the issue of limitation concerning the powers of the King. He favoured a sharing of power between the king and the magnates of the realm. He also stressed the fact that true government is based on law as opposed to tyranny. Consequently, he identified two remedies which are available against tyranny. These are government in which the powers of the ruler are derived from the people. The other remedy rests on the ruler having a political superior such that the redress of grievances is by appeal to the superior.

Writing on the nature of the state, St. Aquinas posits that the state emerged from man's gift of social spirit which propels him to pursue and promote the good of life. He proposed in *Summa theological* that the man who has greater knowledge and sense of justice should use it to help others and not to dominate them. He however insists that the ultimate purpose of man which is the quest for the good of life and enjoyment of God can only be attained through divine grace. Not even the best secular government can guarantee it.

He classified government according to the interests they serve. A just government in his view aims at the good of all as opposed to perverted government which seek only the interest of the ruler. He however maintained that political authority emanates from God and must be obeyed. He classified monarchy as the best form of government and argued that it is suitable for the promotion of unity and peace in the state. In his opinion,

effective mechanism must be put in place to curtail the excesses of the King in order to avert degeneration to tyranny.

### **3.3.3. St. Aquinas and the Nature of Law**

Aquinas described law as a promulgated ordinance of reason designed for the common good and made by him who has care of the community. It is a rule and a measure of act, whereby man is induced to act or is restrained from acting. He argued that law did not have any human origin rather he often sought to relate human law to what he described as divine law. It is his view that law is something much broader in its scope than a means of regulating human relationship. He identified and distinguished four different types of laws. These are eternal law, natural law, human law and divine law.

Eternal law in the views of St. Aquinas implies God's mind which governs the universe. It is the eternal plan of divine wisdom by which the whole creation is ordered. In itself, eternal law is above the physical nature of man and is beyond human comprehension. He however maintains that although man's nature reproduces a distorted image of divine perfection, man still participates in the wisdom and goodness of God. This divine reason is not limited by time and as such is assumed eternally.

Natural law for him is a reflection of divine wisdom in created things. He argued that all things are subject to divine reason because they depend on divine providence. As such, there exists a natural inclination of all creation to seek good and avoid evil, to preserve themselves and to live as perfectly as possible the kind of life suitable to their natural endowments. This implies for man, the desire for a life in which the rational nature may be realised. Specific examples of this in his view include but not restricted to the following: the inherent inclination in men to live in society, to preserve their lives, to beget and educate children, to seek the truth and develop intelligence (Sabine and Thorson; 1973).

He described human law as the particular determination given to the precepts of the natural law. It is the ordinance of reason meant for the common good and made by one who has care for reason. Human law is an integral aspect of the whole system of divine government whereby everything both in heaven and earth is ruled. It has its roots in the reason of God, which regulates the relationships between all creatures. Such laws also constitute an aspect of the cosmic reality. Human law is therefore law of nature which work through the fear of penalties and an unlawful ruler is a violator of human rights and a rebel against the whole system of law by which God rules the world.

Finally, he described divine laws as the divine ordinance that directs man to his supernatural goal which is eternal bliss. It is simply the *Will* of God as revealed in the scriptures. For him, such revelation adds to reason but never destroys it. An example is the specific code of laws which God gave the Jews as the chosen nation and the rules



of Christian morals or legislation given through the church or the scripture. It is more a gift of God's grace than a discovery of natural reason.

### **3.3.4. St. Aquinas on the Church and State**

St Aquinas defended the supremacy of the Church over the state. He argued that the chief purpose of man is to attain virtue through which he qualifies for the eternal enjoyment of God. From this he posits that since the Church is the avenue to attain this end, then the Church should be above the secular authorities as represented in the state. He however maintained that since natural law is produced by the unaided reason and as such common to all men, then morals and government do not in general depend upon Christianity. The obligation to civic obedience is therefore not weakened, but rather strengthened.

From this, he argued that the Christian subjects of a pagan prince are not justified in refusing him obedience. Furthermore, he maintained that the church may absolve the subjects of an apostate or heretic ruler but it ought not to depose a ruler merely because he is an infidel.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *Which of the following persons is sometimes called the Angelic Doctor and the Prince of Scholastics?*
  - A. *St. Paul of Tarsus*
  - B. *St. Augustine of the Paupa*
  - C. *St. Thomas Aquinas*
  - D. *St. Humphrey of Assisi*
2. *The ideas of \_\_\_ were initially treated with dismay and skepticism as bearing the stigma of infidelity.*
  - A. *Plato*
  - B. *Aristotle*
  - C. *Thomas Hobbes*
  - D. *Nicodemus of Cecily*
3. *Which of the following is in the views of St. Aquinas implies God's mind which governs the universe?*
  - A. *Eternal law*
  - B. *Natural law*
  - C. *Human law*
  - D. *International law*
4. *St Aquinas defended the supremacy of the Church over the \_\_\_\_.*
  - A. *State*
  - B. *Country*
  - C. *Government*
  - D. *Society*



### 3.4 Summary

This unit explored the philosophy of St. Aquinas and how it relates to the dominant ideas of his era. Like St. Augustine, the ideas of Thomas Aquinas strengthened the position of the church as existing to pursue the attainment of the future life beyond the grave. He however maintained that the Christian still had obligation to obey the state especially in secular matters. Another significant focus of St. Thomas Aquinas is his focus on the nature and meaning of laws as highlighted above.



### 3.5. References/Further Readings

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### 3.6. Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

#### Answers to SAEs 1

1. C
2. B
3. A
4. A

## Unit 4: Marsiglio of Padua

### Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 Marsilio's Theory of Secular State
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Reading



#### 4.1 Introduction

This unit examines the thoughts and writings of Marsilio of Padua. Specifically it seeks to identify and highlight Marsilio's contribution to the debate between the church and the state with regards to independence and supremacy of both institutions. Of remarkable note is the rationale underlying Marsilio's logics, his notion of social classes and the relationship between human and divine laws.

It is remarkable to note that a remarkable consequence of the philosophy of Marsilio is the attempt to subordinate the church to the state especially with regards to secular powers. This thrust of ideas was further expanded by other philosophers in what became known as the theory of the national state.



#### 4.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the perspectives on the contention between the church and the state
- Identify the main ideas of Marsilio of Padua
- Narrate other views on the changing theories of the state.



#### 4.3 Marsilio's Theory of Secular State

Marsilio advocated the theory of secular government based on the practice and conception of the Italian city states. Marsilio exhibited some bitterness towards the papacy and as such was favourably disposed towards empire building by secular princes. His writing was designed not merely to defend the empire but to destroy the whole system of papal imperialism that developed under Innocent III and the theory of canon law. He sought to define the limits of spiritual authority to control the actions of

secular governments. His writings specifically placed the church under the domain of the state.

Marsilio described the claim of the Pope to supremacy over the temporal rulers as a major source of strife in Europe. Consequently, his thoughts were aimed at seeking a cure for the associated disorder arising from this situation. Marsilio's ideas on this subject are expressed in his book, *Defensor Pacis* ('The Defender of Peace') (1324), which "is only the best known book in a huge literature devoted to the question of the rightful spheres of secular and ecclesiastical princes" (McClelland, 2005:128). Here, he expressed his view that religion has social consequences in addition to its truth. The first part of the document contains the statement of Aristotelian principles and supplies the foundation for the second part where he discussed his conclusions regarding the church, the functions of the priests, their relations to civil authority and the evils which arises from a misunderstanding of these matters. The third part of the *Defensor Pacis* contains forty two theses drawn from the theories developed in the first two parts.

Marsilio conceives the state as a living being composed of parts which performs the functions necessary to its life. Its health or peace consists in the orderly working of each of its parts, and strife arises when one part does its work badly or interferes with another part. He also shares the organic theory concerning the emergence of the city which in his view evolved from the family. The city therefore exists as a "perfect community" which is able to supply all that is needed for a good life. It is important to note that a good life in the views of Marsilio implies both the good in this life and in the life to come. What Marsilio is saying is that the first good life is the proper study of philosophy by means of reason while the knowledge of the second depends on revelation which comes through faith. Reason shows the need for civil government as a means of peace and order while religion has its usefulness both in this life and in the life to come (Sabine and Thorson, 1973).

Marsilio further identified the various classes which make up the society. These are farmers and artisans that supply material goods and the revenue needed by the government; and there are soldiers, officials and priests who make up the state in a stricter sense. The class which is the clergy constitutes the last group. This class generates special difficulty with regards to its classification. This difficulty is as a result of the two-fold purpose which religion plays in the society.

Consequently, Marsilio identifies the function of a Christian clergy to include the knowledge and teaching of those things which the scripture qualified as necessary to believe, to do, or to avoid in the quest for eternal salvation and escape woe. It is the position of Marsilio that in all secular relations the clergy is simply one class in society just like other classes. He further contends that the Christian clergy is precisely like any other priesthood since the end of his teaching is beyond reason and extends to the

future life. What Marsilio is saying here is that the teachings of the priests are not properly a power of authority since it lacks the coercive power of implementation in this reality except in instances in which the legislator empowers the priest accordingly. Simply put, the Christian clergy is bound to obey the state in all temporal matters and must be subject to all social control like other human interests. This is because the church is part of a secular state in every aspect in which temporal matters are concerned. It has been suggested that such a separation of reason and faith is the rot of secularism.

Marsilio further distinguished between divine law and human law. First he described law as a rule of reason or intrinsic justice emanating from a constituted authority and carrying a penalty for its violation. For him, divine law is a command of God directly, without human deliberation. Such laws are usually about the voluntary acts of human beings to be done or avoided in this world for the sake of attaining the best end, or some conditions desirable for man in the world to come. The rewards or penalty for compliance or violation of divine law is not administered in this life. Rather, they are administered by God in a future life.

On the other hand, human law is not derived from divine law rather it represents the command of the whole body of citizens or its part. Its source is derived from the deliberation of those empowered to make laws and these deliberation focus on the voluntary act of human being which should be done or avoided for the sake of attaining the best end. It is also designed to attend to the desirable conditions which man longs for in this world. Its transgressions are usually enforced in this world through the imposition of penalty to the transgressor. Consequently, any rule that involves earthly penalty belongs *ipso facto* to the sphere of human laws and derives its authority from human enactment.

It is the views of Marsilio that human laws arise from the corporate action of a people setting up rules to govern the acts of its members. In other words, he subscribes to the view that it is the whole people who make the laws in their city state. As such all authority is an act of the people and should be exercised in their name and their interests. From this, he maintained that a state is the body of men who owe obedience to a given body of law.

It is Marsilio's view that the executive and judiciary in the state are set up or elected by the citizens. The pattern of election should be peculiar to the custom of each state. However, he insists that the authority of the executive should be derived from the legislative act of the whole body and must be exercised in accordance with the law. Its duties and powers should also be determined by the people. The executive also has the duty to ensure that every part of the state performs its proper functions for the good of the whole. Where it fails, it is removed by the same power (the people) which elected it.

He further maintained that the executive must be unified and supreme so that its power will exceed all other groups in the society. The attributes of unity and supremacy are necessary to avert the evils of strife and disorder.

In a nutshell, Marsilio's notion of a natural and self-sufficing political community is depicted in an organic whole composed of classes as well as physical and ethical components that are relevant to the pursuit of the good of life for the citizens in the secular sense. Its power of regulation is the inevitable right of such a corporation to regulate its own parts for the well being of the whole (Sabine and Thorson, 1973).

The executive power of the state therefore is the agent of the corporation to put into effect whatever the unity of the state requires. The ensuing community is the guardian of its own civilization and if its citizens have a spiritual well-being, which is another realm beyond the life of the state of which it is powerless to touch that life. It is on this platform that Marsilio embarked on the quest to halt the incursion of the spiritual authority in what should otherwise remain in the secular realm of the self-sufficient polity. He argued that since the officials of the corporate community occupy positions of authority by the mandate of the people, it implies that the clergy whose authority is not derived from the people should have no claim to coercive authority. If ever they are to possess civil authority, it must flow from the people which constitute the base of such authority. It must be also realised that since the clergy are a class like every other class, they are subject to regulations like any other class and amenable to civil courts for violations of human law. It is his views that issues of heresy or spiritual offense are only judged by God and punished in the next life since their penalties are incurred beyond the grave. However, if heresy is punished in this world, it is only as a civil offence whose spiritual penalty is damnation. Remarkably, this is also beyond the powers of the clergy. Similarly, it is his view that issues of excommunication belongs to civil authority. By implication, canon laws are not within the framework of distinct jurisdiction and the penalties of divine law are outside the sphere of this world while the penalties of earthly laws are within the powers of secular authorities.

Consequently, the duty of the clergy is restricted to the celebration of religious rites, he can advice and instruct, admonish the wicked and point out the future consequences of sin. However, they lack the power to compel men to do penance. It is the view of Marsilio that the church can hardly own property. Rather what exist as ecclesiastical property are mere grants or subsidies made by the community to support public worship. He further expressed the views that the clergy had no right to tithe and should not be exempted from taxation except where such rights are granted by the community. Simply put, ecclesiastical office like ecclesiastical powers is only a gift from the civil office and the clergy can be legally compelled to perform the offices of religion so long as they receive the benefits.

Furthermore, he maintains that every church official from the Pope to the least in hierarchy can be deposed by civil action. As such, Marsilio's treatise reduced religion to regimentation by civil power. Marsilio believes that ecclesiastical hierarchy has a human origin and its authority is derived from human law and rest on entirely within the sphere

of civil control. Consequently all priests are considered equal and the members of the laity are also churchmen. As such neither the Bishop nor the Pope has a spiritual quality that a simple priest lacks. He further maintains that the priestly character which authorizes them to celebrate the rites of religion is purely a mystical stigma derived from God which has no earthly origin or earthly power or ecclesiastical rank. In reducing the Pope to a position of spiritual equality with other Bishops, Marsilio eliminated papal sovereignty from the organisation of the church. He debunked the assumption that the Pope had authority as the successor of Apostle Peter.

Marsilio however identified the spheres of Christian beliefs where the church can act authoritatively. He opted for a general council which in his view should constitute the organ of the church for deciding on disputes. For him, the Pope and church hierarchy should not be permitted to pass on disputed articles of faith. He rather conceded a mystical infallibility to the General Council of the church as the one point of contact between reason and faith. In such a Council, he maintained that inspiration will join hands with reason to supply an authoritative version of divine law contained in the scripture and a satisfactory answer to reasonable differences of opinion that might arise about such matters.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *Marsilio described the claim of the Pope to supremacy over the temporal rulers as a major source of \_\_\_ in Europe.*
  - A. *Progress*
  - B. *Constitutional amendment*
  - C. *Strife*
  - D. *Development*
2. *Which of the following according to Marsilio the agent of the corporation to put into effect whatever the unity of the state requires?*
  - A. *The spiritual power of the state*
  - B. *The legislative power of the state*
  - C. *The judicial power of the state*
  - D. *The executive power of the state*
3. *Marsilio believes that \_\_\_ hierarchy has a human origin and its authority is derived from human law and rest on entirely within the sphere of civil control.*
  - A. *Ecclesiastical*
  - B. *Secular*
  - C. *Imperial*
  - D. *Legal*
4. *Marsilio identified the spheres of \_\_\_ beliefs where the church can act authoritatively.*
  - A. *Papal*
  - B. *Christian*
  - C. *Ecclesiastical*



#### 4.4 Summary

The thoughts and teachings of Marsilio of Padua demonstrate that Marsilio favoured the supremacy of the state over the institution of the church. This supremacy is borne from the fact that the doctrine of the church seek to address the promises and punishment in a future life beyond the grave and as such not designed to address the aspirations of this life on earth. It is also Marsilio's view that the clergy who direct the events of the church are not elected by the people and as such not answerable to them. Rather, they are a class like any other class. On the other hand, he insists that since the civil officials of the state are elected by the people, they should exercise all authority over other institutions in the polity.



#### 4.5 References/Further Readings

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- Hearnshaw, F.J.C. (1923). *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Medieval Thinkers*. London: Henry Holt and Co.
- McClelland, S. J. (2005). *A History of Western Political Thought*. London and New York: Rutledge.
- Lewis, E. (1954). *Medieval Political Ideas*. New York: Rutledge.
- Sabine, G.H. and Thorson, T.L. (1973). *A History of Political Theory*. Hinsdale, Illinois: Drysden Press.



#### 4.6 Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

##### Answer to SAEs 1

1. C
2. D
3. A
4. B



<b>Module 4</b>	<b>State and Statecraft</b>
Unit 1	Niccolo Machiavelli's Early Life and Influences on Him
Unit 2	Method of Machiavelli
Unit 3	Machiavelli and Modern Political Thought
Unit 4	Political Ideas of Machiavelli

## **Unit 1: Niccolo Machiavelli's Early Life and Influences on Him**

### **Unit Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Niccolo Machiavelli's Early Life and Influences on Him
  - 1.3.1. Niccolo Machiavelli's Early Life and Times
  - 1.3.2. Influences on Niccolo Machiavelli
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to Self Assessment Exercises



### **1.1 Introduction**

Like the human life, political thought is also a constant procedure and it is tough to draw a line of difference between the medieval and modern political thought. Most of the scholars pronounced that the political thought of middle ages is fairly not the same from modern thought. The middle age thought was theological, dogmatic, allegorical, universal and uncritical as equated to the modern that which consist of objective, rational, scientific, secular and national. The Medieval thought was not new but it was a constant procedure of the Hellenic and Roman ideas, to which new ideas of Germanic and Christian traditions contributed.

Modern thought was the result of the Regeneration Movement of 14th and 15th century, in which humanistic principles and scientific viewpoint came to dominate the western political thought. There was an upsurge of literature in which more importance was given to study of relations between man and man, rather than man and God. This sort of studies rested the foundation for a new chapter in political thinking in 17<sup>th</sup> century. The world now witnesses the main components of modern political thought such as secularism, tolerance, emphasis on rights, individual happiness and liberty, popular sovereignty, representative government, contract, private property, international and peace etc., were not known to the ancient and medieval thoughts.

Most of these concepts initiated with ancient political thinkers, and were established by medieval thinkers and these were further advanced by the modern political thinkers. The Regeneration and Reformation thinkers like Machiavelli, Luther, Clavin etc., gave

protruding place to these concepts through their writings and contributed to change from medieval to the modern period. Niccolo Machiavelli was one of the best thinkers of this change. Machiavelli sets a new chapter in the improvement of political philosophy. He was more of a politician rather than political thinker/philosopher. His thoughts were principally determined by the historical background of his life.



## 1.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the early life of Niccolo Machiavelli,
- Identify the influences on the political philosophy of Niccolo Machiavelli.



## 1.3 Niccolo Machiavelli's Early Life and Influences on Him

### 1.3.1. Niccolo Machiavelli's Early Life and Times

Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli (3 May 1469 – 21 June 1527) was an Italian historian, politician, diplomat, philosopher, humanist and writer based in Florence throughout the Renaissance. Machiavelli was a native of Florence, Italy and he served as a Diplomat and Secretary to the Second Chancery in charge of Department of War and Interior Security. Politically, he had no strait-jacket commitment to any regime. Rather he was willing to serve any government irrespective of the political group or party that assumed power. For when the Medici came to power, he began to work overtime to get in good with them. The Medici, however, never fully trusted him since he had been an important official in the Republic. He was tortured and imprisoned and later banished on exile to his country estate at San Casciano. Despite the maltreatments, Machiavelli still strived to get good with the Medicis. In his quest to regain his relevance in the government of Lorenzo de Medici, he wrote his major works while in exile at San Casciano. These works include the *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*, *The Prince*, and *The History of Florence*.

In Machiavelli's time, Italy was made up of independent warring and disunited principalities that were often prey to other European nations. Some of Machiavelli's primary concern was the restoration of Italian glory through the unification of the disputing principalities and kingdoms. Despite his hopes that the Medicis might prove to be those ideal rulers that could unite Italy, they did not remain in power for long. When Guilio de'Medici left Florence to become Pope Clement VII his successors poorly managed the city. The people soon overthrew the Medici rule and established the Third Republic of Florence in 1527. Machiavelli saw his chance and tried to get a position in the new republic, but the new rulers distrusted him because of his long association with the Medici. So on June 22, 1527, only a few months after the establishment of the Third Republic, Machiavelli died. That same year, Rome was sacked by Emperor Charles VII and the Pope was forced to ally with Charles. In 1530, the Pope and Charles led a punitive expedition against Florence and crushed it as an independent state.

### **1.3.2. Influences on Nicollo Machiavelli**

The factors which influenced the thinking and philosophy are hereunder:

#### **1.3.2.1. Conditions in Italy:**

During his time, the Italian Peninsula was separated into a number of small independent states which fought wars continuously. They had dissimilar forms of governments; while some were republics, others were ruled by despotic rules. Some sort of consolidation of these states has been achieved by the beginning of 16th century still they were divided into five groups like 1) Kingdom of Naples, 2) Territory of Roman Catholic Church 3) The Duchy of Milan, 4) The Republic of Venice and 5) Republic of Florence. Distant from interior fights amongst these states there was a severe threat from France and Spain on the borders. Machiavelli wanted to unite these combatant states and make them self-sufficient and strong so that they could handle with them efficiently. He wrote books like Art of War, The Discourses on Livy and the Prince, in this book, he wrote the principles, which he wanted these states to follow so that they could flourish and thrive. He appealed to the strong ruler who could unite the country and oust foreign invaders. He practically observed papacy as a greatest difficulty in way of secular integration.

#### **1.3.2.2. Impact of Republic:**

The Renaissance Movement which was for the stimulation of ancient values and culture had the effect on him, because it was sturdiest movement in Florence. The movement recharged the ancient and had been elapsed the medieval period but also created perception of life, a new prospect of life and freedom. Man becomes centre of all studies and God was relegated to background. This was the revolt against the authority of church; this made the gradual transfer of power from church to state.

Laski (1936: 31) rightly observes that “the whole of the Renaissance is in Machiavelli. There is its lust for power; its admiration for success, its carelessness of means, its rejection of medieval bonds, its frank paganism, its conviction of national unity makes for national strength. Neither his cynicism nor his praise of craftiness is sufficient to conceal the idealist in him”.

To comprehend the full importance of Machiavelli’s writings and their context, it is important to understand the series of cultural, economic, social and political changes that began in the fourteenth century called the Renaissance. Its immediate impact was in Italy, which gradually spread to the rest of Europe by the late fifteenth century. The Renaissance signified a rebirth of the human spirit in the attainment of liberty, self-confidence and optimism. In contradiction to the medieval view, which had envisaged the human being as fallen and depraved in an evil world with the devil at the centre, the Renaissance captured the Greek ideal of the essential goodness of the individual, the beauty and glory of the earth, the joy of existence, the insignificance of the supernatural and the importance of the present, as compared to an irrecoverable past and an uncertain future. This return to a pre-Christian attitude towards humans, God and

Nature found expression in all aspects of human endeavour and creativity. Humanism, affirming the dignity and excellence of the human being, became the basis of comprehending the modern world. In contrast to the medieval Christian stress on asceticism, poverty, humility, misery and the worthlessness of the earthly person, Humanism defended the freedom of the human spirit and knowledge. The Renaissance signaled the breakdown of a unified Christian society.

At the centre of the “Renaissance was the emergence of the new human, an ambitious restless individual, motivated by his self-interest, seeking glory and fame. Self-realization and joy, rather than renunciation and asceticism, were seen as the true ends of human existence and education. Self-fulfillment was no longer viewed as being achieved by repressing natural faculties and emotions. Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) in his classic, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) pointed out that it was the conception of the new human, the individual motivated by fame and glory, self-actualization and happiness, rather than self-denial and religious faith that formed the essence of the Renaissance. The spirit of individualism and the cult of privacy led to the growth of self-assertion and ushered in the idea of the highest development of the individual.

### 1.3.2.3. Emergence of Strong Monarchies:

The arrival of strong monarchs who took the complete political power in their hands, which was with feudatories and corporations, was left an impression on him. He was significantly influenced by the writings of Aristotle and Marsiglio. He learnt the idea of separation of ethics from politics from Aristotle and also the idea of state as the highest organization of human, and also influenced by the division of Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy. He was influenced by Marsiglio, of secularism and political unity of religion are concerned. It was correctly said that he was the epitome of his times.

### Self-Assessment Exercises 1

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

- 1. Which of the following does not represent the profession of Niccolo Machiavelli?*
  - A. Historian*
  - B. Politician*
  - C. Diplomat*
  - D. Logician*
- 2. The arrival of strong \_\_\_ who took the complete political power in their hands, which was with feudatories and corporations, was left an impression on him.*
  - A. Judiciary*
  - B. Politicians*
  - C. Bishops*
  - D. Monarchs*

3. Which of the following was for the stimulation of ancient values and culture had the effect on him, because it was sturdiest movement in Florence?
- A. The Revival Movement
  - B. The Religious Movement
  - C. The Renaissance Movement
  - D. The Republican Movement



#### 1.4 Summary

This unit addressed the life and times of Niccolo Machiavelli, and the factors that influenced his thoughts and writings. The era of Machiavelli is popularly called the era of renaissance, which shaped his political ideas.



#### 1.5. References/Further Readings

Laski, H.J (1936). *An Essay*: London, Unwin Books.

Sabine, G.H. and Thorson, T.L. (1973). *A History of Political Theory*. Hinsdale, Illinois: Drysden Press.



#### 1.6. Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

##### Answer to SAEs 1

1. D
2. D
3. C

## Unit 2: Method of Machiavelli

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 The Method of Machiavelli
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Readings



#### 2.1 Introduction

This unit examines the methods adopted by Niccolò Machiavelli in his explication of the political reality of his time. A critical look at the works of Machiavelli shows the areas he is in agreement with Aristotle and some of the areas of disagreement or deviation from the ideals of Aristotle.



#### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the methods used by Niccolò Machiavelli in his political thought.
- Identify the areas of application to contemporary reality.



#### 2.3. The Method of Machiavelli

The approaches assumed by him are positive and negative aspects in his thinking. The various methods adopted and used by Niccolò Machiavelli are discussed below:

In the positive side of his thinking, he carried out the Aristotelian process from the particular to general. Machiavelli's method has been called inductive or scientific on the ground that he drew conclusions from practical or historical experiences of human nature that does not change under different political regimes. His originality lies in focussing on man's behavioural patterns instead of certain morals for the analysis of politics (Accessed Online at [https://www.brainkart.com/article/Niccolo-Machiavelli---Political-Thought\\_34323/](https://www.brainkart.com/article/Niccolo-Machiavelli---Political-Thought_34323/) 12/10/2022).

His technique was realistic method of observation followed by historical method. Machiavelli is sometimes seen as the prototype of a modern empirical scientist, building generalizations from experience and historical facts, and emphasizing the uselessness of theorizing with the imagination (Fischer, 2000).

He emancipated politics from theology and moral philosophy. He undertook to describe simply what rulers actually did and thus anticipated what was later called the scientific spirit in which questions of good and bad are ignored, and the observer attempts to discover only what really happens (Kaplan, 2005). Machiavelli felt that his early schooling along the lines of a traditional classical education was essentially useless for the purpose of understanding politics. Nevertheless, he advocated intensive study of the past, particularly regarding the founding of a city, which he felt was a key to understanding its later development (Kaplan, 2005).

Machiavelli strove for realism. For four centuries scholars have debated how best to describe his morality. *The Prince* made the word *Machiavellian* a byword for deceit, despotism, and political manipulation. Strauss (2015) declared himself inclined toward the traditional view that Machiavelli was self-consciously a "teacher of evil," since he counsels the princes to avoid the values of justice, mercy, temperance, wisdom, and love of their people in preference to the use of cruelty, violence, fear, and deception. Italian anti-fascist philosopher Benedetto Croce concludes that Machiavelli is simply a "realist" or "pragmatist" who accurately states that moral values in reality do not greatly affect the decisions that political leaders make (Carritt, 1949).

On contemporary politics he made an analytical study. This qualifies Niccolo Machiavelli to be called an empiricist. On conclusion, he took the help of history to authenticate his ideas. The historical method practically suited him, because he was mainly student of practical not speculative politics. He was an experimenter; he had not used political philosophy.

According to Niccolo Machiavelli, the right method to study political science was historical. He says that human desires and passions remain the same always and when the incidents of life are comparable, humanity will tend to find the same remedies and repeat the same conduct. He therefore regarded that the study of the past was very useful to understand the present and would also make it easy to make predictions for the future. He placed the study of politics on historical and realistic foundation and relied on empirical method particularly in the study of political behaviour. He has been described as a pioneer of behaviouralism. He followed this method almost in all contexts both in the *Prince* and *Discourses*. He conceived of politics as an instrument of acquisition, preservation and expansion of power which could be accomplished by harnessing the faculties of the people as they exist in the real world.

His writings were treatise on the art of government rather than the theory of state. In his historical approaches, he used a sort of peculiarity in theory. Historical method to politics comprises criticism of instances in history. His historical method was more in appearance than reality. Thus it may be concluded that his method was inductive. Sabine and Thompson (1973) put it that, his empiricism was based on commonsense practicality. From this, they concluded that his method in so far as he had one, was observation guided by shrewdness and common sense.

By emphasizing the importance of the study of history, Machiavelli established a method that was extremely useful. However, in spite of being a keen observer of history, he presumed that human nature remained permanent and constant, making it possible to deduce principles of political behaviour. However, the reason for such a presumption was because of the fact that he lived in an age of flux, where the political order was transient. The belief in a timeless human nature with permanent needs became the yardstick to measure and explains the transience of political and social orders. In spite of his depiction of the dark side of human nature, he never lost faith in the importance of good society and its role in shaping human beings. He was the first to study extensively the role of corruption in political-life. His writings brought about the central moral dilemmas of political life, for he spoke of unsavoury and unpalatable truths. He rightly observed that in political life, purity of life and goodness of heart mattered little. Success was important, and to be successful, a good person had to learn to be bad without appearing to be so. Glory, liberty and *virtu* constituted the essential ingredients of political success in Machiavelli's lexicon. He lamented the decline of *virtu* in contemporary Italy, which prevented its unification and independence. He condemned an ostentatious and luxurious life, which precluded acts of glory and *virtu*.

On the negative side, he totally rejected the theory of divine law. In other words we can say that he had no faith in the cardinal doctrine that man was able to predetermine to a supernatural end. Since there was supernatural end, there was no need for divine law. He also rejected the natural law as well.

Despite the robust analysis presented by Niccolo Machiavelli, critics have pointed out that Machiavelli's method was only superficially scientific and historical. He did not follow inductive method of proceeding from the 'particular to general'. Nor is his method deductive, which is the method of proceeding from the 'general to the particular'. According to them Machiavelli never touches upon the central problems of political philosophy, such as the justification of the existence of the State, grounds and limits of political obligation etc., He never looks beyond the necessities of practical politics although his vision was broad.

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *Niccolo Machiavelli's originality lies in his focussing on man's \_\_\_\_ patterns instead of certain morals for the analysis of politics.*
  - A. *Educational*
  - B. *Behavioural*
  - C. *Logical*
  - D. *Philosophical*
2. *Which of the following according to Niccolo Machiavelli is the right method to study political science?*
  - A. *Historical*
  - B. *Philosophical*



- C. Quantitatively  
D. Relationally
3. Machiavelli's method was criticised as being only \_\_\_ scientific and historical.
- A. Tentatively  
B. Initiatively  
C. Specifically  
D. Superficially



## 2.4 Summary

Machiavelli touched the nerve of political science with this “value-free” orientation and his name has become a synonym for moral indifference and political cynicism. The issues raised by this venture into realism are still fluttering the dovescotes of political philosophy. He is therefore seen as an empiricist.



## 2.5 References/Further Reading

- Fischer, M. (2000). *Well Ordered License: On the Unity of Machiavelli's Thought*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Book.
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- Sabine, G.H. and Thorson, T.L. (1973). *A History of Political Theory*. Hinsdale, Illinois: Drysdan Press.
- Strauss, L. & Cropsey, J. (2012) (Eds.), *History of Political Philosophy*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.



## 2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

### Answer to SAEs 1

1. B  
2. A  
3. D

## Unit 3: Machiavelli and Modern Political Thought

### Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 Machiavelli as a Modern Thinker
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises



### 3.1 Introduction

The views presented by Niccolo Machiavelli justify the assertion that he is a modern thinker. The views are uniquely different from the views of the medieval era. He was able to provide clear cut responsibility of the state, which among others is to ensure the security of the people. He made a clear distinction between the state and the church and presupposes that the two are mutually independent. The Prince must not be religious but if it is possible, he can make the people religious. Politics is tied to the acquisition and exercise of power.



### 3.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify and discuss the main the factors that qualify Niccolo Machiavelli as a modern thinker.
- Discuss the contemporary utility of his arguments



### 3.3 Machiavelli as a Modern Thinker:

He was a modern thinker only in the sense that, he used certain new ideas which were symbolic of modern age. Some of them are here under:

He rejected the Idea of natural law and created his entire thinking basically on the bad nature of human beings.

He completely rejected the fundamentals placed by medieval thinkers; he considered state, to provide security and peace to the people. For Machiavelli, a well-ordered state ensured the well-being and security necessary to combat social conflict and the radical selfishness of human nature. The state had no higher end or any divine purpose. It did not have a personality different or superior to those who constituted it. Successful states depended on the presence of a strong military, protection of the life, property, family and honour of every citizen, economic prosperity without promoting individual economic aggrandizement, strict regulation of luxury, good laws and respect for authority,

recognition of meritorious citizens, and opportunities for the ambitious to rise within the state based on ability. A well-ordered state was also one where the citizens knew for certain the legal consequences of their actions. Hence, Machiavelli proposed a rational legal system that eliminated arbitrariness, guaranteed legal equality, regularized procedures necessary for redressing grievances, prohibited retroactive laws, and executed laws efficiently and vigorously.

He underlined the secular character of the state and overlooked the principle of 'divine law' which was popular in medieval times. Machiavelli's importance was in providing an outlook that accepted both secularization and amoralization of politics. He took politics out of the context of theology, and subordinated moral principles to the necessities of political existence and people's welfare. He had very little interest in non-political matters. Even his interest in spiritual and religious matters was strictly political. His philosophy was public and not private. The absence of religious polemics in Machiavelli led the theorists who followed to confront issues like order and power in strictly political terms.

The *leitmotiv* of Machiavelli's posthumous life was his great assertion as a thinker, representing his true and essential contribution to the history of human thought, namely, the clear recognition of the autonomy and the necessity of politics "which lies outside the realm of what is morally good or evil". Machiavelli thereby rejected the mediaeval concept of "unity" and became one of the pioneers of the modern spirit

He, for the first time supported the idea of national territory and maintained that the state was independent of the Pope. Machiavelli was also the first to speak of the *raison d'état* of the state. He could perceive the forces shaping the modern nation state like nationalism, national security, and territorial integrity, militarism as forces to safeguard and further state interests. His achievement lay in confronting the secular state and scientifically enquiring into its nature and behaviour. His political realism allowed him to remain neutral towards the means that were to be employed for achieving the ends. Political activities were to be analyzed and appreciated keeping in mind whether they would achieve the objectives for which they were intended. Like the Sophists, he judged actions not as actions, but solely in terms of their consequences. He could foresee the rise of science and capitalism. Some recent interpretations even view him as the earliest exponent of liberalism and pluralism.

The breakthrough of Renaissance political theory lay in Machiavelli's treatment of the legitimacy of regimes and political leaders. Prior to the *Prince* and the *Discourses*, writers treated political regimes dichotomously as pure and corrupt, normative and non-normative, in the original Platonic and Aristotelian senses. Machiavelli, viewing politics as practiced in Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries, legitimized non-normative politics as unavoidable, as survival-related, as part of reality. Machiavelli touched the nerve of political science with this "value-free" orientation and his name has become a synonym for moral indifference and political cynicism. The issues raised by his venture into realism are still fluttering the dovescotes of political philosophy

Unlike medieval thinkers, he made use of inductive method along with historical method.

The important factor, which separates him from medieval thinkers, is that he separated ethics from politics. Machiavelli was the first to state and systematically espouse the power view of politics, laying down the foundations of a new science in the same way as Galileo's Dynamics became the basis of the modern science of nature. Machiavelli identified politics as the struggle for the acquisition, maintenance and consolidation of political power, an analysis developed by Hobbes and Harrington in the seventeenth century, Alexander Hamilton (1755–1804) and James Madison (1751–1836) in the eighteenth century, Pareto, Mosca, and Michels in the nineteenth century, and Edward Hallett Carr, Robert Dahl, David Easton, Hans Morgenthau, Morton Kaplan and Harold Lasswell in the twentieth century.

His thinking of separating politics and morality also give a separate look when compared with medieval thinkers. The main source of dispute concerned Machiavelli's attitude toward conventional moral and religious standards of human conduct, mainly in connection with *The Prince*. For many, his teaching endorses immoralism or, at least, amoralism. The most extreme versions of this reading find Machiavelli to be a "teacher of evil", in the famous words of Strauss (1958: 9–10), on the grounds that he counsels leaders to avoid the common values of justice, mercy, temperance, wisdom, and love of their people in preference to the use of cruelty, violence, fear, and deception. A more moderate school of thought, associated with the name of Croce (1925), views Machiavelli as simply a "realist" or a "pragmatist" advocating the suspension of commonplace ethics in matters of politics. Moral values have no place in the sorts of decisions that political leaders must make, and it is a category error of the gravest sort to think otherwise. Perhaps the mildest version of the amoral hypothesis has been proposed by Skinner (1978), who claims that the ruler's commission of acts deemed vicious by convention is a "last best" option. Concentrating on the claim in *The Prince* that a head of state ought to do good if he can, but must be prepared to commit evil if he must (*Prince* CW 58), Skinner argues that Machiavelli prefers conformity to moral virtue *ceteris paribus*.

He essentially mentions to all those features of the state which progressed during the next two or three centuries like state, is a secular institution and church should be subordinate to it.

While fear of God can be replaced by fear of the Prince, if there is a strong enough prince, Machiavelli felt that having a religion is in any case especially essential to keeping a republic in order. For Machiavelli, a truly great prince can never be conventionally religious himself, but he should make his people religious if he can. According to Strauss (1958), he was not the first person to ever explain religion in this way, but his description of religion was novel because of the way he integrated this into his general account of princes.

### Self-Assessment Exercises 1

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.

1. According to Machiavelli, a well-ordered \_\_\_\_ ensured the well-being and security necessary to combat social conflict and the radical selfishness of human nature.
  - A. Society
  - B. State
  - C. System
  - D. Security sector
2. The breakthrough of \_\_\_\_ political theory lay in Machiavelli's treatment of the legitimacy of regimes and political leaders.
  - A. Renaissance
  - B. Republican
  - C. Realist
  - D. Rational
3. For Machiavelli, a truly great prince can never be conventionally \_\_\_\_ himself, but he should make his people religious if he can.
  - A. Righteous
  - B. Immoral
  - C. Religious
  - D. Wicked



### 3.4 Summary

The thinking of Niccolo Machiavelli will continue to shape the politics of the modern era. His popular slogan that the 'end justifies the means' is legendary. It places emphasis on the need for a strong Prince who must maintain social order and the security of the people at all cost. His inductive reasoning, empirical, and pragmatic points of view will continue to shape the field of political science,



### 3.5. References/Further Readings

- Croce, B. (1925). *Elementi di politica*, Bari: Laterza & Figli.
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**3.6 Possible Answers to Self Assessment Exercises (SAEs)**  
**Answer to SAEs 1**

1. *B*
2. *A*
3. *C*

## Unit 4: The Political Ideas of Machiavelli

### Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 The Political Ideas of Machiavelli
  - 4.3.1. Machiavelli on Human Nature
  - 4.3.2. His Views on Morality, Religion, and Politics
  - 4.3.3. His Theory of State and Its Preservation
  - 4.3.4. Suggestions to the Prince for Retention of Power
  - 4.3.5. Machiavelli's Political Thought
  - 4.3.6. Shortcomings in Machiavelli
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Reading
- 4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises



#### 4.1 Introduction

Growing up, and through his time in political office, Machiavelli studied the men and/or groups in power, specifically noting their successes and failures. Using this information from his observations, Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* in order to try to re-enter politics by “assisting” the man whom had exiled him, Lorenzo de Medici, in his ruling. Though this was more of a plot to try to gain the favour of Lorenzo, he does note in his book that in order to gain the favour of a prince, you must present him with a gift; that was the purpose of his novel. In it, Machiavelli analyses the various types of monarchies, analysis of the different types of states, how they may be obtained, and how they should be ruled. He also describes how power is seized and retained, how to rule the military forces and, the essence of his work, how a prince should act in all circumstances in order to accomplish these tasks.



#### 4.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss Niccolo Machiavelli's view on human nature,
- Narrate Niccolo Machiavelli' view on morality and religion,
- Examine Machiavelli theory of the state and state preservation,
- Explain some of the shortcomings of Machiavelli's political thought.



#### 4.3 The Political Ideas of Machiavelli:

He was not a methodical political thinker; he uttered separate views in his works. We can associate his ideas in a systematic manner and study them.

#### **4.3.1. Machiavelli on Human Nature**

He conveyed his opinions on human nature in his 'Prince'. The individual, according to Machiavelli, was wicked, selfish and egoistic. He was fundamentally weak, ungrateful, exhibitionist, artificial, anxious to avoid danger and excessively desirous of gain. Lacking in honesty and justice, he was ready to act in a manner that was detrimental to the community. It was only under compulsion or when there was personal gain that an individual was ready to do what is good. Being essentially antisocial, anarchical, selfish, greedy and sensual, the individual would readily forgive the murder of his father, but never the seizure of property. He was grateful to the extent of expecting benefits and rewards. The individual was generally timid, averse to new ideas and complaints. He desired power, glory and material well-being. Elsewhere, Machiavelli observed that the desires for novelty, fear and love dictated human actions. Individuals establish a government with the strongest and the most courageous becoming lawgivers and leaders as they desire personal safety and security of possessions. Like Aristotle, he believed that the government made the individual just and fair.

Machiavelli conceived human beings as being basically restless, ambitious, aggressive and acquisitive, in a state of constant strife and anarchy. They were discontented and dissatisfied, for human needs were unlimited, but fortune limited their possessions and capacity for enjoyment. Under such circumstances, politics got plagued by the dilemma of limited goods and limitless ambition. By making scarcity the focal point of his enquiry and political theorizing, Machiavelli helped to launch the redefinition of the political association, a redefinition which by starting with the legitimacy of conflict of interests, would end by doubting that such an association could afford to pursue final solutions in the handling of conflicts.

Interestingly, Machiavelli presumed that human nature remained constant, for history moved in a cyclical way, alternating between growth and decay. This enabled one to discern general laws of political behaviour with a view to maximizing one's gain. He observed that there was not much difference between how individuals lived and how they *ought* to live, for the one who sacrificed what had to be done in favour of what ought to be done normally sowed the seeds of destruction rather than preservation.

Furthermore, Machiavelli pointed out that the human mind tended to glorify the past, decry the present and hope for a better future. Like Aristotle, Machiavelli characterized the individual as a political animal. While Aristotle implied the innate sociability of the human being, Machiavelli referred to the individual's love for power, reputation, keenness to establish superiority over others, and the innate desire to control and dominate others. However, Machiavelli confined these traits to the elite. He did not, like Nietzsche, deprecate the abilities of the non-elite, nor did he, like Hobbes, see the desire for power and domination as a universal aspiration.



Machiavelli recognized the importance of order provided by a stable, lawful political community consisting of public-spirited and virtuous citizens. Such an arrangement fulfilled the human need of being admired, respected and remembered. A ruler who preserved the state without undermining or flouting laws or inflicting harm attained fame and respect. On the contrary, the absence of civic *virtu* led to moral degradation and corruption.

#### **4.3.2. His Views on Morality, Religion, and Politics**

These basic building blocks of Machiavelli's thought have induced considerable controversy among his readers going back to the sixteenth century, when he was denounced as an apostle of the Devil, but also was read and applied sympathetically by authors (and politicians) enunciating the doctrine of "reason of state" (Meinecke, 1957). The main source of dispute concerned Machiavelli's attitude toward conventional moral and religious standards of human conduct, mainly in connection with *The Prince*. For many, his teaching endorses immoralism or, at least, amoralism. The most extreme versions of this reading find Machiavelli to be a "teacher of evil", in the famous words of Strauss (1958: 9–10), on the grounds that he counsels leaders to avoid the common values of justice, mercy, temperance, wisdom, and love of their people in preference to the use of cruelty, violence, fear, and deception. A more moderate school of thought, associated with the name of Croce (1925), views Machiavelli as simply a "realist" or a "pragmatist" advocating the suspension of commonplace ethics in matters of politics. Moral values have no place in the sorts of decisions that political leaders must make, and it is a category error of the gravest sort to think otherwise. Perhaps the mildest version of the amoral hypothesis has been proposed by Skinner (1978), who claims that the ruler's commission of acts deemed vicious by convention is a "last best" option. Concentrating on the claim in *The Prince* that a head of state ought to do good if he can, but must be prepared to commit evil if he must (*Prince* CW 58), Skinner argues that Machiavelli prefers conformity to moral virtue *ceteris paribus*.

Disinterest in ethical concerns also permeates the claim, popular in the early- and mid-twentieth century, that Machiavelli simply adopts the stance of a scientist—a kind of "Galileo of politics"—in distinguishing between the "facts" of political life and the "values" of moral judgment (Olschki, 1945; Cassirer, 1946; Prezzolini, 1967). He is thereby set into the context of the scientific revolution more generally. The point of Machiavellian "science" is not to distinguish between "just" and "unjust" forms of government, but to explain how politicians deploy power for their own gain. Thus, Machiavelli rises to the mantle of the founder of "modern" political science, in contrast with Aristotle's classical norm-laden vision of a political science of virtue. More recently, the Machiavelli-as-scientist interpretation has largely gone out of favor, although some have recently found merit in a revised version of the thesis (Dyer and Nederman, 2016).

Other of Machiavelli's readers has found no taint of immoralism in his thought whatsoever. Jean-Jacques Rousseau long ago held that the real lesson of *The Prince* is to teach the people the truth about how princes behave and thus to expose, rather than celebrate, the immorality at the core of one-man rule. Various versions of this thesis have been disseminated more recently. Some scholars, such as Mattingly (1958), have pronounced Machiavelli the supreme satirist, pointing out the foibles of princes and their advisors. The fact that Machiavelli later wrote biting popular stage comedies is cited as evidence in support of his strong satirical bent. Thus, we should take nothing Machiavelli says about moral conduct at face value, but instead should understand his remarks as sharply humorous commentary on public affairs. Alternatively, Deitz (1986) asserts that Machiavelli's agenda was driven by a desire to "trap" the prince by offering carefully crafted advice (such as arming the people) designed to undo the ruler if taken seriously and followed.

A similar range of opinions exists in connection with Machiavelli's attitude toward religion in general, and Christianity in particular. Machiavelli was no friend of the institutionalized Christian Church as he knew it. The *Discourses* makes clear that conventional Christianity saps from human beings the vigor required for active civil life (CW 228–229, 330–331). And *The Prince* speaks with equal parts disdain and admiration about the contemporary condition of the Church and its Pope (CW 29, 44–46, 65, 91–92). Many scholars have taken such evidence to indicate that Machiavelli was himself profoundly anti-Christian, preferring the pagan civil religions of ancient societies such as Rome, which he regarded to be more suitable for a city endowed with *virtù*. Parel (1992) argues that Machiavelli's cosmos, governed by the movements of the stars and the balance of the humors, takes on an essentially pagan and pre-Christian cast. For others, Machiavelli may best be described as a man of conventional, if unenthusiastic, piety, prepared to bow to the externalities of worship but not deeply devoted in either soul or mind to the tenets of Christian faith. A few dissenting voices, most notably Grazia (1989) and Viroli (2010) have attempted to rescue Machiavelli's reputation from those who view him as hostile or indifferent to Christianity. Grazia demonstrates how central biblical themes run throughout Machiavelli's writings, finding there a coherent conception of a divinely-centered and ordered cosmos in which other forces ("the heavens", "fortune", and the like) are subsumed under a divine will and plan. Nederman (2009: 28–49) extends and systematizes Grazia's insights by showing how such central Christian theological doctrines as grace and free will form important elements of Machiavelli's conceptual structure. Viroli considers, by contrast, the historical attitudes toward the Christian religion as manifested in the Florentine republic of Machiavelli's day.

### **4.3.3. His Theory of State and Its Preservation**

Machiavelli well thought-out state as the highest connotation and all the subjects must submit to state. State was to be present to check the selfish interests of human beings and it was artificial creation. State was estimated to create and promote materials and prosperity to the people. The prosperity of people specifies the success or failure of the state. According to him a successful state was originated by single man and laws which were made by him replicates national character of state, he favoured Monarchy and completely disliked Aristocracy.

He classified states into two types namely;

- 1) Normal and
- 2) Perverted.

According to him, a normal state was the one in which citizens were faithful and law abiding. They were ready to safeguard their motherland because they have spirit of patriotism. In the perverted state above qualities would not be present. He said that normal state had tendency to grow when compared to perverted state.

Machiavelli laid down detailed rules and preservation to strengthening of state. They are as follows.

1. State must have a dependable army poised of native troops and should not depend on foreign acquisitive soldiers.
2. He considers Republican state as the best, but under the, then prevailing conditions he favoured Monarchical State. He says “The only way to establish any kind of order there is to found a monarchical government; for these the body of people is so thoroughly corrupt that the laws are ineffective for curb, it becomes essential to establish some superior power which, with a royal hand and with full and absolute power, may put a curb upon the undue desire and corruption of the powerful”.
3. His state is completely secular in so far as he does not attribute any unearthly reason to its presence.
4. The state has a natural predisposition to expand or grow in power.
5. Law occupies a dominant position in the state. Though he observed force and fear as important aspects in administration, yet he also reflects the good laws as the foundation steps of the state.

### **4.3.4. Suggestions to the Prince for Retention of Power**

Machiavelli was not a political philosopher, but he was chiefly concerned with art of government. Thus, he made contributory references to the theory of state and at length with the principles which the Prince should observe to maintain himself in power.

Machiavelli cautioned the prince against excessive generosity, strictness or kindness, and stressed the need for moderate behaviour. A prince had to be gentle or severe depending on the situation. His relationship with his subjects was similar to the one between a father and his children. A prince had to be strong, and demonstrate his strength whenever necessary. He had to govern his state responsibly and efficiently, ensuring its stability and survival. He had to retain the upper hand and initiative at all times. He had to be held in awe, if not fear. He had to be careful in selecting the

methods and means by which he ruled. He had to uphold conventional standards of morality and notions of right by preserving the foundations of religion.

The prince had to abstain from the property and women of his subjects, for these matters, if violated, affected men's sensibilities, driving them to the point of resistance. A prince had to select his officers and advisers carefully, should not hesitate to purge those who had been disloyal. The ruler had to constantly try and expand the state's territory and play the balance of power game skillfully by appearing to be the defender of weaker states. Machiavelli advised the prince to adopt a policy of coalition rather than remain isolated, for neutrality was impossible both domestically and internationally. It would be better to support one side and wage an honest war; otherwise one became prey to the victor or got isolated in a later crisis. The best thing to do was to join a weak rather than a strong state, for in case of a common victory the gains would be marginal, but the losses would be low in case of a common defeat.

Machiavelli insisted on the need for legal remedies against official abuses in order to prevent illegal violence. A prince, in order to succeed, had to be willing to act ruthlessly, combining the valour and courage of a lion with the cunning and shrewdness of a fox. This was because a lion could ward off wolves and a fox could recognize traps. A ruler had to be courageous to fight his enemies, and cunning enough to detect conspiracies. The attributes of the Prince enunciated by Niccolo Machiavelli was evidenced in the regime of General Sanni Abacha of Nigeria. Machiavelli stated that The Prince could do what he said only if he could change his colours like a chameleon, for in a corrupt age greatness could be achieved only by immoral means.

A prince had to know to fight with the help of laws and force. While laws were for civilized persons, force was for the brutes. Both represented two different styles of fighting and could be combined, if necessary, to achieve effective results. Force was necessary since the individual was wretched and dishonourable. This is evident in his description of the nature of individual. So, to him, 'the end justifies the means'. Any means adopted is good if it will achieve the end of following the mandate of the state.

Furthermore, Machiavelli pointed out that princes ought to exterminate the families of the rulers whose territories they wished to possess securely. Opponents ought to be murdered otherwise they could plan their revenge. True liberality consisted in being stingy with one's own property but generous with that of others, a prudent use of virtue and vice in order to be happy, conferring benefits little by little so that they would be appreciated more strongly, never to leave a defeated foe wounded, for there would be a sure retaliation, and causing sufficient injury so that they would hurt less and last for a short time. Machiavelli also advised the prince to imitate great figures from the past, and cited the examples of Alexander the Great, Achilles, Caesar, and Scipio Cyrus. He

repeatedly referred to Moses, Cyrus, Romulus and Thesus as princes who attained their positions through their own arms and ability, and so worthy of imitation.

In addition to above, he made number of other suggestions for state craft. Machiavelli is the most universally reprobated figure in the history of political literature which are regularly followed in practice.

#### **4.3.5. Machiavelli's Political Thought**

His main contributions to the history of political thought have left a deep influence on the political thinkers of following centuries.

1. He completely disallowed the feudal conception of a hierarchy of autonomous entities and predicted a territorial, natural and sovereign state.
2. He deserves the credit for acquittal politics from the churches of ethics, before to him politics were under the churches. He said that there are two distinct standards of morality for the state and individual.
3. He was the first thinker to definitely condemn the authority of the church and tried to reduce it a subordinate position to the Government.
4. He, for the first time offered materialist clarification of the origin of state, and collectively overlooked the metaphysical or supernatural elements. Though his views in this regard were not identical with Karl Marx, these views have profound influence on Karl Marx.
5. He was the first exponent of the principle of 'power politics' and propounded the theory of aggrandizement which insisted that the statement either expand or perish.
6. His historical method was another important contribution to the history of political thought.
7. He was a great pragmatic thinker.
8. He attached great importance to study of human psychology and advised his rules to formulate his policies, keeping in view of people's wishes and sentiments.

In view of his contributions to political thought, much praise has been bestowed on Machiavelli.

#### **4.3.6. Shortcomings in Machiavelli**

He is one of the misjudged political thinkers, according to Sabine and Thorson (1973), he has been represented as an utter cynic, an impassionate patriot, an ardent nationalist, a political Jesuit, convinced democrat and an unscrupulous seeker after the favour of depots. In each of these views, incompatible as they are, there is probably an element of truth. What is emphatically not true is that no one of them gives a complete picture either of Machiavelli or his thoughts. He has contributed many thoughts which are new, and consist of number of faults and is being under severe attack. Some of his contradictions and defects are here under:

1. There is contradiction about his hypothesis about the nature of human and reasons which monitor him as sketched in Prince and Discourses. He said in the Prince, man is selfish fundamentally and not able to do good unless appreciative to do so. Whereas in Discourses, he said that, men are neither absolutely bad

nor faultlessly good, human character is more complex. If we think that man is selfish it is very difficult to clarify how he works with others to form a state. He also prefers the republic form of government because it can work successfully if the people ready to sacrifice their selfish ends for the uplifting of the society.

2. It is criticised because some of his ideas are shallow and unsuccessful to accumulate proper political concepts. He missed logical and philosophical aspects to his theory; Sabine and Thorson (1973) said that, he was perhaps too practical to be philosophically profound. He is not considered as political thinker instead he considers as person with practical question of politics. His writings are mere diplomatic literatures.
3. The philosophy explained by him only just local narrowly dated, he has seen people behaving very crooked and thought that all human are bad. It is not good to analyze the whole human society on the basis of Italian grounds. Allen said about him that, his judgment of human nature was surely, profoundly at fault. May it not be said that he lacked understanding of just what he most of all needed to know.
4. The principle of “ends justify the means” has been criticised severely, one of the writer said that, “what is morally wrong can never be politically right’. The crimes based on politics can lead to counter offences and more crimes are expected from it. His policy corrupted public opinion and encouraging dishonest political practices all over the world.
5. Machiavelli gave unnecessary status to the role of force in keeping people united. He did not estimate the importance of willing cooperation of the people forcing unity to work effectively in the state.
6. He has given more importance to the rulers or the law givers in moulding the moral, religious and economic life of the people, the statement seems to be incorrect and he seems to be guilty reserving the “sane order of values” and useful order with casual efficiency. He says that law giver is the architect of the state and society, in fact the society comes first and others later.
7. He is unable to recognize that prince as a human being may try to encourage his self-interest at the cost of public interest.
8. There has been contradiction between appreciation of monarchical government and his republican government. Sabine said that, “his judgment was swayed by two admirations for the resourceful despot and for the self-governing people which were not consistent. He patched the two together rather precariously”. If we accept Machiavelli’s statement, the only possibility is despotic monarchy and the republican government is ruled out, republican government encourages public spirit among the citizens. It is not possible to do everything by the prince

### **Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

*Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.*

1. *In the Prince, which of the following is not part of the nature of an individual?*  
A. *Wicked*

- B. Selfish
  - C. Egoistic
  - D. Compassionate
2. Which of the following political thinkers rose to the mantle of the founder of modern political science?
    - A. Baron de Montesquieu
    - B. Niccolo Machiavelli
    - C. Karl Marx
    - D. Aristotle
  3. The \_\_\_ of people specifies the success or failure of the state?
    - A. Prosperity
    - B. Poverty
    - C. Potentials
    - D. Production
  4. According to Niccolo Machiavelli, a \_\_\_ state was the one in which citizens were faithful and law abiding.
    - A. Abnormal
    - B. Law abiding
    - C. Strong
    - D. Normal
  5. Which of the following was favoured by Niccolo Machiavelli?
    - A. Oligarchy
    - B. Aristocracy
    - C. Monarchy
    - D. Democracy
  6. A prince, in order to succeed, had to be willing to act \_\_\_, combining the valour and courage of a lion with the cunning and shrewdness of a fox.
    - A. Intelligently
    - B. Carefully
    - C. Ruthlessly
    - D. Religiously



#### 4.4 Summary

Machiavelli's work has attracted both admiration and condemnation since the release of his work. Some critics maintain that *The Prince* was inspired by the devil. However, despite the raging criticisms, even critics acknowledge that the ideas of Machiavelli are designed to strengthen political leadership and foster unity within the polity



#### 4.5 References/Further Readings

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#### 4.6. Possible Answers to Self – Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

##### Answer to SAEs 1

1. D
2. B
3. A
4. D
5. C
6. C