**BIGARD MEMORIAL SEMINARY ENUGU**

**FACULTY OF PHILOSPHY**

**COURSE: PHIL 305** - **SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

**YEAR 3**

**2019/2020 SESSION**

**1ST SEMESTER**

**LECTURER: OBIORA MAGNUS IGWE**

**INTRODUCTION**

The word ‘Philosophy’ is of ancient Greek origin meaning “Love of Knowledge” or “Love of Wisdom”. There are many branches of philosophy such as Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, Logic, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of mind, Social and Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Education, Philosophy of Beauty (Aesthetics), Philosophy of Language, etc. Philosophy deals with certain general problems regarding the universe, human life, man’s place in the universe, his duties and human values. Philosophy discusses and critically evaluates the general concepts such as Knowledge, Truth, God, Values, Space, Time, Cause, Liberation, etc.

Social Philosophy is one of the main and important branches of Philosophy. It is the thoughtful consideration of human society. It gives insight into the actual activities of human beings in the society.

**SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY: ITS NATURE AND SCOPE**

Man is a social animal. The entire existence of every human being is sustained, nurtured, furthered and developed in all the aspects through the active cooperation of his fellow beings.

Social Philosophy tries to find out the basic laws which operate in the society and influence human relations.

In Western civilization, we can find traces of Social Philosophy in Plato’s “Republic”. Plato depicted the picture of ideal society (Utopia). He classified the people of the society into three categories as per their talents into Rulers, warriors and workers. Plato stated that the philosopher must be the King. Aristotle’s Social Philosophy is more realistic. For him the chief aim of the state is to produce good citizens who can perform their ethical duties in a better way.

The rapid development in physics, mathematics and mechanics in the 17th century had great impact on Social Philosophy. It exposed the drawbacks of social institutions and set forth ideals for the guidance of conduct in society. In the 19th and 20th century, Social Philosophy became more comprehensive and systematic. Its aim was to interpret society with reference to the essential social unity of mankind.

**Definition of Social Philosophy**

An individual is born in the society and thereafter interacts with the society throughout his life. The society is the soil where his personality is nurtured. *Social Philosophy is the philosophy of human relations in Society.* Society is a group of individuals united together with a definite end in view. Society is a web social relationship. The nucleus of the society is man. Society is a dynamic organization of purposive individuals.

According to Morris Ginsberg, ‘*Social Philosophy aims at the formulation of the general principles of human behavior through speculation on social phenomena’*.

For Bertrand Russell, ‘*Social Philosophy seeks the conditions in which all the constructive tendencies of man (such as love and sympathy), Social marriage and education can provide maximum possible opportunities to produce the people who can save the world from future catastrophe.*

Social philosophy studies the interactions and inter-relations that exist among men and their groups.

**NATURE OF SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY**

Social Philosophy is the philosophy of practice. It inquires into ‘what is Right or Good for man and society’. Social Philosophy deals with the individual’s Highest Good in the society. It is primarily concerned with general questions concerning the problems of society such as social cohesion, social progress and social disintegration.

Social Philosophy is the philosophical study of the questions about human social behavior. It is concerned with the institutions like *family, educational institutions, economic institutions such as business and markets*. It is also related with religious and social institutions for recreation and enjoyment. The social classifications like race, caste and gender too are studied in Social Philosophy.

Social Philosophy as a science of society reflects upon the basic nature of human relationships in society. It studies the interrelation of social organizations and the relation of individual to these organizations. It speculates upon the principles that underlie the human behavior. Social Philosophy studies the structure and functions of social systems and investigates into their philosophical implications.

Social Philosophy studies the most fundamental laws which influence social cohesion, social progress, social change and social disintegration. It seeks insight into the causes of social crimes, juvenile delinquency, child labor, honor killing, gender differentiation, injustice, and inequality. It tries to find out the root causes of social pathology and suggests the remedies for it. Social Philosophy seeks to discover and restore the social bonds that hold the mankind together

Social Philosophy reflects upon the impact of science and technology on human society and gives a comprehensive philosophy of civilization. It incorporates the conclusions of other sciences and gives their philosophical interpretation. Social Philosophy has axiological point of view. It defines the social values such as common good, happiness, peace, security, justice, freedom, excellence/beauty, punctuality and discipline.

We live in globalizing world and society is becoming more and more inclusive. Social Philosophy is concerned with the problems of marginalization of certain sections of society all over the world on the basis of birth, education, skills, gender, age, profession and possessions. The traditional social institutions such as religion, family and marriage are undergoing radical changes. The social values need modification or redefinition to enhance the progress of individuals and groups. Social Philosophy tries to meet all the requirements to maintain social solidarity. It views the entire mankind as one family which has a unique kind of fraternity and commitment. The unity and the wholeness of such a family aim at the realization of love, compassion and justice for its members. The scope of Social Philosophy includes everything which has human and social significance.

**POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

Political Philosophy is the study of the relationship between individuals and society. It tries to answer the questions: How are we to live in the society? What are the underlying principles of the State, of authority and of political ideals? What is the best way to govern our interactions? What responsibilities do we have to each other?

In Western civilization, Political Philosophy arose from the need on how to govern and how to live in a city-state of Greece. Its goal was the creation and preservation of an ideal society. We find the traces of Political Philosophy in the ‘Republic’ of Plato. However the credit goes to Aristotle for the first genuine political treatise. Aristotle's treatise concentrates on stating, defending, and applying the principles that governments actually work upon. Aristotle in his Politics speaks of diverse forms of government and social structure.

In the Eastern civilization, Confucius was the first thinker to relate ethics to the political order. In India, Chanakya laid down rules and guidelines for social, law and political order in society. The views of Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, Jeremy Bentham, Rousseau, J S Mill, Karl Marx, Jacques Derrida, Glovnni Gentile, Antonio Gramsci, Isaiah Berlin and John Rawls are noteworthy contributions to Political Philosophy.

**Definition of Political Philosophy**

Political Philosophy can be defined as *“philosophical reflection on how best to arrange our collective life – our political institutions and our social practices*”. *It is the study of the relationship between individuals and society*. Political Philosophy is a “branch of Philosophy which studies fundamental questions concerning the communal life of human beings”. Political Philosophy *gives insights into the various aspects of the origin of the state, its institutions and laws.* According to Vidya Mahajan in his work “*Political Theory*: *Principles of Political Science*”, **political philosophy is wide and concerns itself with man’s political life. It deals with the nature and purpose of the state, the rights and duties of the people who inhabit it, the place of the individual in relation to the state and the ideal it ought to achieve. It also deals with the nature of political obligation, political disobedience, justice, equality and liberty** (Mahajan 1988:10). Political philosophy is simply the *theory* that guides political *practice*. It is the light that shows the way.

**Nature of Political Philosophy**

Political Philosophy is the reflection on how to organize our collective life. Its aim is to find out the conditions in which social relations of man are possible. It deals with principles which underlie the political institutions such as state and government. Political Philosophy is a thought provoking process about the political institutions and social practices of human beings. It seeks insight into the ideals of state, the functions of the state etc. It seeks to establish the fundamental principles that justify the form of the state and the rights of its citizens. Political Philosophy analyzes and interprets the concepts like Justice, Freedom, Security, Discipline, Peace; Human Welfare etc. It attempts to apply these concepts to the social and political institutions.

**The problems of Political Philosophy change with the material circumstances of life :** Political Philosophy seeks to establish the basic principles in the relationship between the individuals and the society. It seeks solutions to the crisis that entire civilization confronts. Political Philosophy arises from the need to arrange the collective life. Obviously it is open to change and there is always a need of philosophical justification. The approach of Political philosophers reflects the general tendencies of their epoch.

In ancient Greek time, Political Philosophy raised the questions regarding various forms of political organizations. Plato gives us a sketch of ideal government. Aristotle speaks of different forms of government. The central question for Greek thinkers was to search ideal form of state. Confucius in China sought to find means of restoring political unity and political stability through cultivation of virtues. Chanakya in India aimed at political unity and stability through imposition of discipline.

St Thomas Aquinas emphasized the harmony inherent in reason and revelation. In Medieval Europe the proper relationship between Church and State became a central issue in Political Philosophy.

In the Nineteenth century the question of social welfare became major issue of philosophical inquiry. The question was how an industrial society should organize its economy and its welfare system. Another question rose, how far the rule of one person (state) over other person (state) is justifiable?

Modern era discussed the meaning, the interpretation and the scope of the concepts such as justice, freedom, political obligation, authority, citizenship, power, property, sovereignty, coercion, fraternity, equality and collective responsibility.

Contemporary thinkers focus upon the questions of social justice, feminism, environment and the political institutions that reflect their cultural, linguistic or regional identity. The major issue today is the obligation of human race towards the Mother Nature. Thus the problems in Political Philosophy change in accordance with the empirical and material circumstances of life.

Test Questions

a)State the definitions of Political Philosophy. b) Explain the nature of Political Philosophy.

**WHAT IS SOCIO-POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY?**

**Socio-political philosophy is the philosophical investigation on how best society should be organized in order to provide man with what he needs, develop himself, and live a happy life**. Man is by nature a social being intended by nature to live in society. He cannot live outside society. He cannot develop his potentialities outside society nor can he even survive at all outside society. He needs the company of his follow men to survive.

Besides, he needs so many things, which he alone cannot provide for himself. He needs others to provide them for him in order to be able to develop his potentialities and live a happy life. This is the purpose for which societies are formed. The problem of socio-political philosophy is how to organize them in order to fulfill this purpose.

**There are different levels and different kinds of society**. Some of them are basic to human existence and are consequently universal, while others are not. The most basic is the domestic society, the family. It is the foundation of all other societies and is the oldest and most universal society. But it cannot provide all that man needs for the development of his potentialities and happiness. There are so many things a man needs which the family cannot provide. Hence a number of families naturally join together and form a village. But there are still very many things a man needs which his village cannot provide. The village eventually grows into a town or a number of villages join together to form a town.' The town or the city is also limited in what it can provide man for the *development* of his potentialities *and* happiness. Hence a number of town and cities combine to form a state. Although there were city-states in Ancient Greece, and there are still a few today in some *parts of* the world, states *in the modern* world *are generally* made up of very may cities, and administered together as a single political unit under one legal system.

**Socio-political philosophy** ***has to do with how best such societies (states) should be organized in order to provide its members with what they need to develop their potentialities and live a happy life.***

**The formation of societies can also be seen as one of man's attempts to adapt himself to his environment for his survival**. Man, like other animals, has the gregarious instinct, i.e. the instinct to live in a group. **And as a rational animal, he has to find out how the group is to be organized for his own survival.** "Hence political theory is simply man's attempts to consciously understand and solve the problem of his group life and organization". In this respect political philosophers have played a significant role in Western Civilization. The task of finding out how society should be organized in such a way that it will provide man with what he needs for the development of his potentialities and happiness has been mainly that of philosophers. The list of such philosophers is long, beginning with Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, J.J. Rousseau, Montesquieu, Jean Badin, Hume, Burke, Hegel, Marx, John'Rawls, etc.

Political philosophers study how best to organize society politically. In other words, they study politics. But what is politics? It can be defined as "what governments do to rule people and what people do to try to influence their government"3. This, of course, includes the laws and policies of government with its machinery for implementing and enforcing them, the law-making arm of government (the legislature), the interpretation and application of the laws (the judiciary), and the method of getting into power. Political philosophers are theoreticians; they propound theories of what a political society ought to be. This is the function of political philosophers.

A study of the socio-political development in the Western world shows that their political practice has all along been guided by philosophers who propounded theories that they followed. Today the western world is the most developed part of the world politically because their practices have always been guided by the theories of their philosophers who have been showing them the way. Philosophers show the way for others to follow. So, political philosophers show the way for politicians to follow. To trace the history of the political development of the Western world is to trace the history of their political philosophers that have guided them through the ages with their theories. They include, the Sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Marsilio of Padua, Williams of Ockham, Machiavelli, Jean Bodin, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, David Hume, Burke, Immanuel Kant, Hegel, Jeremy Bentham, John Stmt Mill, Karl Marx, and in our own day John Rawls. Credit must be given to these philosophers for the political development of the Western world which makes it the most politically advanced part of the world today. They were the "think-tank" of the western world, they were the intellectual source of the light that guided the political practice of the Western world, showing them the way, by their theories.

**Man's highest faculty is his rational faculty, that is, his power of reasoning, and the power of transcendence is part of this power of reasoning.** Thanks to this power of transcendence, man can never be held bound in any particular condition permanently. When man finds himself in any given unpleasant situation, he resorts to his power of transcendence and envisages a different and better situation. He, in other words, forms a picture of a better situation and begins to strive towards it, removing all obstacles on the way, making necessary changes, until eventually that picture of a different and better situation (a theory) becomes a reality. He gets himself out of the unpleasant situation in which he found himself and places himself in the new and better situation which by his power of transcendence he had envisaged as a theory, and which by practical actions he has turned into reality. When the present situation eventually becomes unpleasant and undesirable, he again resorts to his power of transcendence and envisages a different and better situation (another theory) and begins to work towards making it a reality. This is how human beings progress in this world, through the power of transcendence, which is part of the reasoning faculty. **The Western world has made more progress than the other parts of the world because its philosophers have spent so much time** - some of them their whole life time thinking, resorting to the power of transcendence and coming up with theories which eventually became realities.

**Every political theory, every scientific invention comes through the power of transcendence**. As Karl Popper has rightly argued every scientific experiment, every scientific observation is preceded by a theory which comes from the use of the power of transcendence. The western world has realized the importance of philosophers long ago, and has given them a prominent place in their society. These do the thinking for them, making use of the power of transcendence and coming up with theories which they work on and which influence their lives for the better.

Thus political philosophy is the theory that guides political practice. It is the intellectual light that shows the way. It involves the use of the power of transcendence to transcend any given unpleasant and undesirable political situation, any given political structure, and envisage a different and better structure. This envisaged political structure becomes, in time, a reality after necessary changes have been made in the current structure. That is why political philosophers have always been in the vanguard of political changes, vanguard of socio-political progress in society. Political philosophy is thus the study of the political ideas and theories of philosophers, the prime movers of socio-political progress. It is the study of the political ideas underlying political structures.

In this course therefore, we shall have the opportunity to study the classical, medieval and contemporary political thoughts of major philosophers.

**PROBLEMS OF SOCIO-POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

The first and most basic problem of socio-political philosophy is the problem of *Justice.* In fact, it was the search for the solution of this problem that led Plato to propose his utopia, the Ideal State in his *Republic.* What he came up with which he considered as the society in which justice prevails has been severely criticized as in fact an unjust society, a closed society, a regimented society where there is little or no freedom, a society divided into classes, where some citizens and their children belong to the privileged class of rulers. The problem of justice is central to socio-political philosophy. All political theories can in fact be seen as various attempts to resolve this basic problem. Put simply, the problem of justice is how to organize society so that there will be justice and fairness for all the members. This was what led to the various types and systems of government which mankind has been experimenting through the Ages. These include monarchy, despotism, dictatorship, oligarchy, aristocracy, totalitarianism, and democracy which is the most popular in our own time. The same problem led, through the Ages, to such systems of government as feudalism, capitalism, socialism, welfarism, mixed-economy and communism. We shall examine some of these types and systems of government in a in this course. Thus the problem of what system of government to adopt is perhaps, the first problem people face as soon as they become a sovereign state. Today most countries world over have adopted democracy or at least claim to have done so.

**Fundamental IDEAS**

**What is Politics?**

The word ‘Politics’ has different interpretations for different persons. Scholars differ greatly on the definition of politics. That is natural because as Stanley Hoffman remarks, “How could one agree once and for all upon the definition of a field whose scope is in constant flux, indeed a field whose fluctuation is one of its principle characteristics”. It cannot be defined in generally acceptable way. Different political scientists have defined the term politic or political science in different ways. We can discuss the term under two headings – traditional and modern views.

**Traditional view**

According to Gettel, “Political Science deals with the association of human beings that form political units, with the organization of their governments and with the activities of these governments in making and administering law in carrying on inter-state relations”. In her view, Paul Janet says that “political science is that part of social science which treats the foundations of the state and principles of government.” And on his part, Prof. Laski says that “the study of Politics concerns itself with the life of man in relation to organized states”. Political Science begins and ends with the state (Dr. Garner). The view of Prof. Fairlie is that political science deals “with the life of man as organized under government and law, in what is known as the state. It includes a study of the organization and the activities of States, and of the principles and ideals which underlie political organizations and activities. It considers the problems of adjusting political authority to individual liberty, the relations of men which are controlled by the state and the relations of men to the state. It deals with the distribution of governing power among the several agencies by which the actions of the state are determined, expressed and exercised, and with the problem of international life.” The Gareis says that “political science deals with the origin, development, purpose and political problems of the state.”

It is clear from the above definitions of the traditional view that the main subject of study of political science is the state and government.

**Modern View**

Political science as the study of the state and government and its relationship with the individual remained valid for a long time until the dawn of the twentieth century which saw fresh ground being covered by political scientists led by George Catlin, Charles Merriam, Almond Powell and a host of others. Sociologists like Max Weber, in an attempt to distinguish political science from other social sciences made a departure and pointed out that the central idea of politics must be power. The point was well taken up and a host of writers in the US began to give attention and focus on the study of power.

Various definitions in this regard came up. Harold Lasswell defined political science as “an empirical science, that studies the shaping and sharing of power”. Robson gave his own contribution. For him, “political science centres on the struggle to gain and retain power, to exercise power or influence over others or to resist that exercise.” Max Weber observes, “Politics is the struggle for power or the influencing of those in power.” In his book ‘Modern Political Analysis’, Robert Dahl writes, “Power, influence and authority are common place words that ordinary men share with political practitioners and political theorists. One hears of power to govern, the power of the purse, political power, spiritual power, economic power, national power, judicial power, presidential power, black power, student power, state power.” Then J.H. Price says, “Politics has been defined as the study of the general principles on which government can be carried on successfully; in other words, the study of the exercise of power.”

All the above definitions centred on power were seen to be deficient. Attempts were made to modify them by appealing to legitimacy of government. It was said that only legitimate power would become the basis for the acceptance of the government by the people.

Another modern view has it that politics is concerned with man. According to Prof. Laski, the study of politics concerns itself with the life of man in relation to organized state. It deals with human beings in organized society.

Thus the study of politics includes the study of power, influence and authority, authoritative allocation of values, conflicts, controversy and cooperation, group involvement, process of decision-making, political institutions, etc.

With the above definitions one can see how difficult it is to have one generally accepted definition of politics or political science.

**Is Politics a Science?**

Politics is not an exact science, like physics and chemistry, because the material with which it deals is incapable of being treated in the same exact way. Physics and chemistry are natural or physical sciences; they deal with matter. Politics, economics and ethics are social sciences; they deal with man in society. One chemical element is exactly the same all the world over; any variations in its composition can be tested and explained. It is difficult to consider problems of man in the same exact way as we consider problems of matter. Social phenomena are perpetually undergoing change and are more difficult to control. The motives which lead men to act are so complex and variable that it is difficult to determine these motives or predict them confidently. However, politics is still a science. Like other social sciences, it has a scientific character because the scientific method is applicable to its phenomena, namely, the accumulation of facts, the linking of these together in causal sequences and the generalization from the latter of fundamental laws or principles. It is true that the laboratory method of experimental is difficult with social sciences, but the whole field of historical facts and the facts of the contemporary world are there for the student to observe, classify, connect, and compare for the formulation of general principles. Take for instance the history of revolutions, such as the English revolution of 1688, the French revolution of 1789, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the Chinese Revolution of 1949, are the materials for the student to study and compare. Aristotle was able to study the revolutions prior to his day (he studied the history of 158 constitutions) to formulate the generalization that the most general cause of revolutionary movements was the craving of men for equality; and their best preventive, the principle of the mean. This shows the possibility of the scientific character of political investigation.

**Politics and History**

The subject matter of Politics is closely related to History. History is a record of past events and movements, their causes and interrelations. It includes a survey of economic, religious, intellectual and social developments as well as a study of states, their growth and organization and their relations with one another. Politics and history are mutually interdependent. Some facts of history constitute a part of the groundwork of political science—those facts which are significant for the study of political ideas and institutions; in this sense, historical facts are the raw materials of political science.

But while political science is dependent of history for its raw material, it must be made clear that history supplies only a part of its material. It has to draw largely on other social sciences such as economics, ethics, psychology, and jurisprudence.

**Economics and Politics**

A classical definition of economics is that it is a study of mankind in the ordinary business of life; it examines the part of individual and social action which is most closely connected with the attainment and with the use of the material requisites of well-being. Briefly, it is the science of wealth. Economics touches Politics at more than one point because the production and the distribution of wealth are largely influenced by government, and because the solution of many economic problems must come through political channels. Indeed the close influence of Politics on economic conditions is enormous such that early writers on economics considered their subject as a branch of Politics and termed it political economy. Taxation, tariff laws, government ownership of public utilities like railways and electricity, and State aid to agriculture and industry are instances where governmental policy clearly affects economic prosperity. Indeed many problems of the modern State are essentially economic in character.

Furthermore, political ideas and institutions are themselves influenced by economic conditions. A good example is in the field of socialism, which is largely a theory born out of a view to reducing economic inequality. The influence of economic conditions on political institutions is illustrated by the rise of feudal government in medieval Europe, in which political power and citizenship were based on the holding of land.

**Politics and Ethics**

Ethics is a branch of study which investigates the laws of morality and formulates rules of conduct. It deals with the rightness and wrongness of man’s conduct and the ideals towards which man in working. Politics is the science of political order and ethics is the science of moral order. Both deal with questions of right and wrong. The relation between the two is so close that Plato regarded political science a sub-division of ethics and the function of the State was to produce virtuous people. Both politics and ethics aim at doing good to man and promoting common welfare. Therefore, insofar as Politics is concerned with questions of ‘what ought to be’, it has points of contact with ethics.