

Political Theory Examination Answers

1. Discuss the nature and scope of political theory.

Nature of Political Theory: Political theory is a systematic study of political ideas, concepts, and principles that seek to explain, evaluate, and prescribe political phenomena. It involves:

- **Normative Analysis:** Examines what ought to be (e.g., justice, equality, rights).
- **Empirical Analysis:** Studies what is (e.g., power structures, governance).
- **Conceptual Clarity:** Defines key terms like liberty, democracy, and justice.
- **Critical Evaluation:** Assesses existing political systems and ideologies.

Scope of Political Theory:

1. **Study of State and Government:** Examines the origin, functions, and legitimacy of political institutions.
2. **Political Ideologies:** Analyzes liberalism, socialism, feminism, etc.
3. **Concepts of Power and Authority:** Explores how power is exercised and justified.
4. **Justice and Rights:** Discusses distributive justice, human rights, and equality.
5. **Global Political Issues:** Addresses globalization, environmental politics, and international justice.

Political theory is both descriptive (explaining realities) and prescriptive (suggesting ideals).

2. What is liberty? Distinguish between negative and positive concepts of liberty.

Liberty refers to the absence of restraints (freedom from interference) and the presence of conditions enabling self-realization (freedom to act).

Negative Liberty (Isaiah Berlin)

- **Definition:** Freedom from external coercion or interference.
- **Focus:** Non-interference by the state or others.
- **Example:** Freedom of speech means no censorship.
- **Criticism:** Ignores socio-economic barriers (e.g., poverty limits choices).

Positive Liberty (T.H. Green, Rousseau)

- **Definition:** Freedom to achieve one's potential through self-mastery and enabling conditions.
- **Focus:** State's role in providing education, healthcare, etc.
- **Example:** Welfare policies empower individuals.
- **Criticism:** May justify authoritarianism ("forcing people to be free").

Key Difference: Negative liberty is about "freedom from," while positive liberty is about "freedom to."

3. Examine various aspects of equality of opportunity.

Equality of Opportunity ensures all individuals have the same chances to succeed, regardless of birth or identity.

Aspects:**1. Formal Equality:**

- Legal prohibition of discrimination (e.g., equal access to jobs).
- *Critique:* Ignores historical disadvantages (e.g., caste, race).

2. Meritocracy:

- Rewards based on talent and effort.
- *Critique:* Assumes a level playing field (ignores privilege).

3. Social and Economic Equality:

- Redistribution of resources (e.g., affirmative action, public education).
- *Example:* Reservations for marginalized groups.

4. Equal Access to Public Goods:

- Healthcare, education, and infrastructure for all.

5. Global Equality:

- Addressing global disparities (e.g., fair trade, climate justice).

Debate: Liberals emphasize meritocracy; socialists advocate redistributive measures.

4. Discuss Rawls's theory of justice.

John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* (1971) proposed a liberal-egalitarian framework:

Key Principles:**1. First Principle (Liberty):**

- Equal basic liberties (speech, vote, religion) for all.

2. Second Principle (Equality):

- (a) **Fair Equality of Opportunity:** Offices open to all under merit.
- (b) **Difference Principle:** Inequalities allowed only if they benefit the least advantaged (e.g., progressive taxation).

Original Position & Veil of Ignorance:

- Hypothetical scenario where rational individuals design society without knowing their future status.
- Ensures impartiality (no bias toward privilege).

Criticisms:

- Communitarians argue it ignores cultural contexts.
- Libertarians (Nozick) reject redistribution as coercive.

5. What do you understand by rights? Briefly discuss the concept of natural rights.

Rights are entitlements that individuals possess, protected by law or moral norms.

Natural Rights (Locke, Rousseau):

- Inherent to human existence (not granted by the state).
- Include life, liberty, and property (Locke).
- Basis for modern human rights declarations.
- *Critique:* Cultural relativists argue rights vary by society.

Types of Rights:

- **Civil:** Free speech, equality before law.
- **Political:** Vote, contest elections.
- **Social:** Education, healthcare.

6. Distinguish between sex and gender. Do you think that gender is a social construction? Give reasons.

Sex: Biological differences (chromosomes, anatomy).

Gender: Sociocultural roles, behaviors (masculinity/femininity).

Gender as Social Construction (Judith Butler):

1. **Cultural Variation:** Gender roles differ across societies (e.g., matriarchal tribes).
 2. **Performativity:** Gender is "acted out" through norms (clothing, professions).
 3. **Historical Change:** Women's roles evolved (e.g., suffrage, workplace entry).
 4. **Institutional Reinforcement:** Media, education, and laws perpetuate stereotypes.
- Counter-Argument:** Biological determinists claim gender stems from innate traits.
- Conclusion:** While biology influences sex, gender is largely constructed through socialization.

7. Examine the debates on Marxist theory of state.

Marxist View (Marx & Engels):

- State is a tool of the ruling class ("bourgeois dictatorship").
- Maintains capitalism by suppressing proletariat revolts.

Debates:

1. Instrumentalist vs. Structuralist:

- *Instrumentalists (Milband):* State directly serves capitalists.
- *Structuralists (Poulantzas):* State autonomously stabilizes capitalism.

2. Welfare State Critique:

- Reforms (labor laws) delay revolution by pacifying workers.

3. Globalization:

- Transnational corporations weaken state power.

Criticism:

- Pluralists argue states balance diverse interests.
- Post-Marxists (Gramsci) emphasize cultural hegemony over coercion.

8. Do you think that democracy is helpful for economic growth? Give reasons.

Arguments For:

1. **Accountability:** Prevents corruption (e.g., electoral punishment for misrule).
2. **Innovation:** Free speech fosters entrepreneurship.
3. **Stability:** Peaceful transitions attract investment.

Arguments Against:

1. **Short-Termism:** Populist policies hinder long-term growth (e.g., unsustainable welfare).
2. **Slow Decision-Making:** Delays in consensus-building (e.g., India's land reforms).

Case Studies:

- *South Korea:* Democracy followed industrialization.
- *China:* Authoritarian growth challenges the democracy-growth link.

Conclusion: Democracy aids equitable growth but requires strong institutions.

9. Should the state intervene in family affairs? Give reasons.

Arguments For Intervention:

1. **Human Rights:** Prevents domestic abuse, child marriage.
2. **Gender Equality:** Laws against dowry, inheritance discrimination.
3. **Public Health:** Vaccination mandates, education laws.

Arguments Against:

1. **Privacy:** Family as a private sphere (liberal view).
2. **Cultural Relativism:** Traditions vary (e.g., homeschooling norms).

Examples:

- *India:* Ban on triple talaq (state protecting Muslim women).
- *Sweden:* Parental leave policies promote gender equity.

Balance: State should intervene only to prevent harm (Mill's "harm principle").

10. Write short notes on Any Two of the following:

(a) Civil Society

- Non-state actors (NGOs, unions, media) mediating between individuals and state.
- Promotes accountability (e.g., RTI activism in India).
- *Critique:* Elite domination (e.g., corporate-funded NGOs).

(b) Positive Discrimination

- Affirmative action for historically marginalized groups (e.g., SC/ST reservations).
- Aims for substantive equality.
- *Debate:* "Reverse discrimination" vs. reparative justice.

(c) Marxist View of Politics

- Politics reflects class struggle; state serves capitalists.
- Revolution needed for proletariat emancipation.
- *Evolution:* Neo-Marxists focus on cultural hegemony (Gramsci).

(d) Marshall's Theory of Citizenship

- **Three Stages:**
 1. **Civil Rights (18th century):** Liberty, property.
 2. **Political Rights (19th century):** Vote, contest elections.
 3. **Social Rights (20th century):** Education, healthcare.
- *Critique:* Ignores global inequalities (e.g., migrant rights).