

FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

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Lecture-3



Is Political Science a Science?

The controversy whether political science is science or not is as old as the subject itself. Even today the controversy has not died down. There are a large number of people, many of whom are prominent in their own fields, who believe that to call political science a science is simply a travesty of the word science.

The central idea of science is the experimentation and after that correct prediction and it is unfortunate that these two have hardly any scope in political science and because of this political science cannot be placed in the same rank of physics or chemistry.

But the opponents of this view forcefully argue that physics and chemistry are science no doubt but they are not only sciences, there are others types of science. Physics and chemistry are physical science but there are also social sciences and political science is a prominent branch of social science. When we call political science a branch of social science, we invariably use the word science in a broad sense.

In this sense the word science means systematic study of any subject in a very methodical way and to arrive at certain conclusion based on information, facts collected and analysed in a scientific way. Thus in political science there is certain amount of scope of prediction and generalisation which are based on scientific study and investigations.

It is interesting to note that the persons associated with its formations used the word 'science'. Webb couple and many other dignitaries were associated with this institution and they preferred the word science. Till today a very large number of people like the word science. Politics and political science both are interchangeably used.

A few decades back there was great hesitation' regarding the use of the word science. But today the subject has reached such a stage of development that there is no sign of hesitation.

Today attempts are being made to make the subject scientific and for this purpose researchers, students and scholars are trying hard to make the subject objective as well as value-free. They are also endeavouring to explain and analyse the events systematically. Behaviouralism is an example.

In support of the contention that political science can reasonably be called science Mackenzie has drawn our attention to some of the recent developments. He says, "Techniques of data collection and data processing have developed enormously". More emphasis is being given to the training in the subject and it is gradually intensified.

Mackenzie also points out that a large number of natural scientists are taking more and more interests in political science. For example, physical scientists are interested in war and peace as well as disarmament treaties. Because the decisions of politicians and statesmen considerably influence the research in physics and allied subjects. Today the political science is treated as a system which means that it is a part of bigger environment.

The various units of environment influence each other. The tangible result is political science influences other branches of social and physical science and at the same time it is also influenced by other sciences. Hence biology, botany and other disciplines come to be related with political science. Political science borrows methods of analysis from these disciplines. In this way political science is gradually improving itself and this has raised its status as a science.

Political scientists are now borrowing materials and methods from games theory, and cybernetics. New methods of scientific analyses are being applied to political science. Of all these methods the most important is statistical or mathematical method. The empirical approach to the study of politics uses the statistical method.

Political Science is a Social Science:

In the last section of our analysis we mentioned that though political science is not pure science like physics and chemistry it is undoubtedly a prominent branch of social science. This observation is laconic in nature and therefore requires elaboration. We have already noted Morgenthau's definition of political science.

For the sake of relevance we quote him again, "Political science grew not by virtue of an intellectual principle germane to the field, but in response to pressures from the outside. What could not be defined in terms of traditional academic disciplines was defined as political science". Wasby says that this definition of political science is true with respect to both content and method of political science.

From the above observation we again conclude that what we declare as the content of political science is, in fact, derived from many other subjects which are known as branches of social science. Hence there is hardly anything like pure political science, various aspects and matters of political science are derived from a number of social sciences. Even political science borrows its method of analysis from other subjects.

With the passing away of time and the development of man's knowledge and interest the dependence of political science upon other social sciences is increasing. It is also to be noted here that this dependence is never a one way traffic. Other disciplines of social science are in one way or other dependent on political science. To sum up, political science and other disciplines of social science are interdependent.

It is to be noted here that no science physical or social can claim purity and it is due to the interdependence of subjects. Today we are acquainted with the terms such as bio-physics, bio-chemistry, ethical economics, welfare politics etc.

Political Science is Dependent on Society:

The materials which build up the structure of political science, it is asserted, are derived from society. Bernard Crick, a prominent English political scientist has specifically given stress on this aspect of political science. He says that the political and related issues and events of society considerably influence political science.

When a political scientist starts to analyse any aspect of political science his thoughts and views are circumscribed by the prevailing situation and happenings of the society in which he lives. Beginning from Plato down to Marx not a single political scientist or philosopher could deny the influence and pressure of the prevailing time and situation. Even the political scientists of the present epoch cannot evade the influence of incidents and circumstances around them.

The degrading condition of democracy and devaluation of values, morality, ideals etc influenced Plato and Aristotle to declare their opinion against democracy and to devise an ambitious plan for an ideal state. The near anarchical condition of Britain led Hobbes to think that only an absolute sovereign power could restore peace and tranquility in society.

When Locke began to write his treatise liberal thought was about to flourish and because of that he strongly advocated for liberalism. The miserable conditions of workers of Britain pained Marx and Engels so much that they devoted their entire life to the way of emancipation of the working class.

MCQ

1 According to Socrates, the soul is:

(a) Infinitely large (b) Inherently virtuous (c) Corruptible (d) Immortal

2 According to Socrates, learning is a kind of: (a) Recollection (b) Virtue (c) Political skill (d) Gift of the gods

3. Who was the founder of Western philosophy?

(a) Socrates (b) Aristotle (c) Plato (d) None of these

4. Socrates has become renowned for his contribution to the field of:

(a) Ethics (b) Economics (c) Chemistry (d) None of these

5. Who said, "No one errs or does wrong willingly or knowingly"?

(a) Plato (b) Socrates (c) Xenophon (d) Aristotle