

Relation of Political Science with the other Social Sciences

Aristotle has called Political Science 'The Master Science' as it deals with human beings who is a social being having many dimensions; historical, political, economical, psychological, sociological etc. Political Science is concerned with the political aspect of this social man and his interaction with the various dimensions of his social life, be it economical, social, psychological, sociological, historical etc. One question which comes to mind, therefore, is it correct to call Political Science 'the master science' or is it just one of the social sciences? Until 18th Century specialization of Political Science didn't exist since various aspects of society was studied under single discipline known as 'moral philosophy'. In the words of Lipset "Until the 18th Century the moral sciences, as the social sciences were then known, possessed greater unity than diversity¹". The beginning of 19th century brought industrialization and with it came specialization of social sciences as it became beyond the scope of Political science to study the various aspects of the complicated social phenomenon under a single discipline. Easton writes, "the purely physical need for a division of labour helps to account for the distinctions among the social sciences...the social sciences have grown up as separate disciplines because and only because of this historical necessity. The actual allocation of subject matter to the various disciplines is simply a matter of accident...even though distinctions in social knowledge have existed from the every beginning of human inquiry into the society²".

What distinguishes political science as an academic discipline is its emphasis on government and power. However, the study of government and power is not confined to political science: it naturally permeates into other social sciences and hence its association with the other social sciences and the growth of interdisciplinary study in social sciences. According to Easton, "Specialization in social sciences has stimulated a movement towards a reintegration of our compartmentalized knowledge; which should go a long way towards remedying these defects. Even though the future must witness an increase in the rate of cross-fertilization and in the degree of cooperation among the social sciences, there are few realists who envision the

¹ Lipset, S M (1960), "Political Man", pp. 23-102.

² Easton, David (1953), "The Political System", pp. 103.

ultimate fusion and disappearance of all specialties into one body of knowledge³”. In fact it was the growth of empirical theory in political science which developed after the Second World War which shifted the focus from the study of state and government to the study of political behaviour and attitudes. It was this application of scientific methods to the study of political phenomenon and behaviouralism which brought in the need for interdisciplinary study of political science. Thus Easton has rightly commented, “Theoretical revolution in the study of the political phenomena, in the form of empirical theory has opened the door to a new and more meaningful relationship between political science and the other disciplines⁴”.

Thus political science borrowed many theories and concepts, methods and techniques from other social sciences. For example decision making theory from organizational field, structural functional approach from sociology and anthropology, action theory from sociology, system analysis from communication sciences etc. even new concepts like political culture, political socialization, political communication, political development etc are being adopted and hence emphasis is being laid on the study of community power structure⁵. Hence one could say that it is this so called behavioral revolution in social science and the growth of empirical enquiry to the issues of politics which has given rise to the interdisciplinary approach in political science. The following section deals with the relation of political science with some of the other social sciences.

Political Science and History

John Seeley once remarked that, “History without Political Science has no fruit and Political Science without History has no root.” Seeley might have exaggerated the relationship between the two yet there is intimate relationship between the two social sciences and they borrow heavily from each other. The political science deals with state and institutions related with it which have their roots in history and in order to understand them fully one has to trace their historical evolution. History through its vast resources provides good scope for comparative

³ Easton, David (1953), “The Political System”, pp. 101.

⁴ Easton, David (1966), “Alternative Strategies in Theoretical Research” in *Varieties of Political Theory*, Englewood Cliffs, pp. 6-7.

⁵ Torn book.

analysis of political structures and institutions of different times to arrive at the best possible ideal. Robson is of the opinion that some knowledge of History is clearly indispensable for Political Science and cites the explanation offered by Professor R. Solatu at the Cambridge Conference (from 6 to 10 April, 1952). Professor Solatu said, “that he had been baffled all through his teaching career, especially during the 20 years he had spent in the Middle East, about how to teach the history of political philosophy to students whose historical background is usually inadequate, and often limited to purely political theory since the French Revolution⁶.”

Political Science and Sociology

Sociology is the science which deals with human beings and their social relationship. Political science deals with the political activities of men. Political activities influences and is influenced by the social life of men. Political science studies state, government and power mostly while sociology provides sociological background to the forms of government, the nature of governmental organs, the laws and sphere of the state activities as determined by the social processes⁷. As political science deals with state sociology also studies state as one of the human association. The special study of the political life of society is very important for the complete study of the society as a whole⁸. According to Morris Ginsberg "Historically, Sociology has its main roots in politics and philosophy of history". The state, which is the center of political science in its early stage, was more of a social than political institution.

Sociology depends very much on political science in every respect. The state and governments make laws for the welfare of the society; the government removes social evils such as poverty, unemployment, dowry and so on from the society. The undesirable customs are uprooted from the society by the government. The government gives financial assistance to people at the time of natural calamities such as floods, famine, cyclone and drought. In the same way, political science depends upon sociology and sociology provides material to political science that is the political

⁶ Dhawan, Suhana (2012), “Relationship between Political Science and History-Essay”, URL: <http://www.shareyouressays.com/89023/relationship-between-political-science-and-history-essay>

⁷ http://sociology-trisa.blogspot.in/2010/09/relationship-between-sociology-and_10.html

⁸ Ibid

life of the people. The laws which are formed by the government are based on the social customs, traditions, mores, norms, etc. of the society. Most of the changes which have been taken place in the political theory, during the past times have been possible due to sociology⁹. For understanding of political problems, some knowledge about sociology is very essential because all political problems are mainly corrected with a social aspect. In this connection F.H. Gidding says "To teach the theory of the state to men who have not learn the first principle of sociology is like teaching astronomy or thermodynamics to men who have not learnt Newton's laws of Motion".

Despite the fact the two social sciences draw heavily from each other there are basic differences between the two. Whereas sociology studies society as a whole and human beings as a part of it political science deals with politically organised unit of society. The scope of sociology is wider than political science. That is why professor Garner remarks "Political science is concerned with only human form association such as state, sociology deals with all forms of association." Sociology studies all kinds of social relationship in a general way. But political science studies only the political aspect of social relationship in a particular way. Sociology studies both organized and disorganized societies. But political science studies only the politically organized societies. Sociology deals with both formal as well as informal relations of the society, which are based on customs, traditions, folkways, mores, norms etc. But political science deals only with formal relations based on laws and order of the state¹⁰.

Political Science and Psychology

Political science and psychology are closely related to each other and their merging has given rise to a new discipline called 'political psychology' which tries to use theories and facts to explain and understand political problems. The State and its political institutions are the products of the human mind and can best be understood in terms of the mind. Thus, Barker says, "The application of the psychological clue to the riddles of human activity has indeed become the fashion of the day. If our

⁹ Kumar, Bharat (), "What is the relationship between sociology and political science", <http://www.preservearticles.com/201102214068/what-is-the-relationship-between-sociology-and-political-science.html>

¹⁰ Ibid

forefathers thought biologically, we think psychologically." Gabriel Tarde, Le Bon MacDougall, Graham Wallas, and Baldwin are the prominent writers who have given psychological explanations of almost all the political problems. Government to be stable and really popular must reflect and express the mental ideas and moral sentiments of those who are subject to its authority; in short, it must be in harmony with what Le Bon calls the mental constitution of the race¹¹. In the democratic processes the part played by social psychology is, thus, subtle. Modern psychologists study men in groups as well as individual behaviour. The study of social psychology often has more direct relevance for the political scientist than does individual psychology¹².

Political Science and Ethics

Ethics is concerned with normative questions such as 'what ought to be', although political science too deals with the normative issues in the pursuit of an ideal political order but it is not confined to them alone. Though both Political Science and Ethics aim at the noble and righteous life of man, yet the former is primarily concerned with the political governance of man whereas the latter refers to man's conduct and morality; that is, whereas Political Science deals with political order, Ethics deals with moral order. Moral laws prescribe absolute standards of right and wrong, justice and injustice, but the laws of the State follow standard of expediency¹³.

However a man can pursue his moral ends only in and through state. That is why Aristotle had said that a good citizen is possible in a good State and that a bad State makes bad citizens. He further maintained that while the State comes into existence for the sake of life, it continues to exist for the sake of good life. Good life is the end of the State and all political problems revolve around it. What is morally wrong cannot be politically right, because there cannot be a good State where wrong ethical ideals prevail. Greek philosophers laid too much stress on the ethical side of state and that is why one finds that Plato's Republic is more of an ethical endeavour

¹¹ Mehta, Vipul (), "What is the relationship between Psychology and Political Science", <http://www.publishyourarticles.net/knowledge-hub/science/what-is-the-relationship-between-psychology-and-political-science.html>

¹² Ibid

¹³ Mehta, Vipul (), "What is the relationship between ethics and Political Science", URL: <http://www.publishyourarticles.net/knowledge-hub/political-science/what-is-the-relationship-between-ethics-and-political-science.html>

into the realm of politics than a study of politics. In fact it was Machiavelli who freed ethics from political science and thereafter a host of political scientists aimed at complete dichotomy between political science and ethics such as Stuart Rice, Karl Llewellyn, R M MacIver, Harold D Laswell and others. However in the 20th century there was again an attempt for the re-inclusion of metaphysics in the realm of political science by authors like Alfred Weber, Jacques Maritan, Eric Voegelin, Thomas I Cook, Lord Acton, Mahatma Gandhi etc. by way of conclusion it could be said that while the political science is conditioned by ethics, the material with which the two disciplines deals is quite distinct. Yet both the disciplines deal with men and his happiness and prosperity through the system of justice.

Political Science and Economics

The scholars of ancient Greece regarded economics as a sub-division of political science. Both political science and economics is concerned with the welfare of mankind and his relationship with the society and hence Adam Smith regarded them as parts of the same subject. Sir James Stewart believes that there exist the same relationship between Economics and Political Science as exist between the thrift and the family. To quote him, “what economy is in the family, political economy is in the state”.

Harold Laswell defined politics as the process of deciding who gets what, when and how whereas economics deal with distribution of scarce resources deciding what to produce, how to produce and for whom to produce. These two definitions represent the intrinsic relationship between the two social sciences. Often the type of economic system which operates within a country is chosen by the government in power. The government decides the process of production, distribution, trade and commerce; it takes measures for the increase of production of essential commodities either by increasing the producers of such commodities or by producing them by itself; restricts the production of unnecessary and harmful commodities and secures improvement of the means of transportation with a view to managing a good distribution system¹⁴. The government controls foreign trade, currency system, mending and borrowing. All these and other are economic issues which require

¹⁴ Sarmah, Durga Kant (2004), “Political Science”, New Age International publishers, New Delhi.

political approach for permanent solution. In fact a successful welfare programme required close collaboration between political scientists, economists and politicians.

The concept of individual liberty also proves that there is close relationship between political science and economics. For the happiness and prosperity of the people both political and economic liberty are essential. Terminologically too there is a relationship between the two social sciences which deals with similar concepts like socialism, capitalism, communism, Marxism etc.

Political Science and Anthropology

The collaboration between Political Science and Anthropology particularly in the field of concepts and methodologies is tremendously beneficial for both the discipline. Anthropology deals with racial divisions of man, his physical character, his geographic division, his environmental and social relations, and his cultural development. It is a science which studies mankind in relation to physical, social, and cultural development. Political anthropology challenges the illusion of the “autonomy of the political” assumed by political science to characterize so-called modern societies. The contribution of Anthropology to Political Science is considerable, and modern researches in the racial division, habits, customs, and organisations of primitive man help us to know the real origin of the State and the development of various political institutions¹⁵. The political behaviour of man is greatly influenced by his racial origin and the environments in which he lives. Without a good knowledge of early societies, their laws, customs, manners and modes of government, we cannot understand accurately the modern institutions and the political behaviour of the people.

An important reference in this section could be made of an important book ‘Anthropology and Political Science: A Convergent Approach’ focusing on the influence of anthropology on political science. The book examines the basic assumptions the practitioners of each discipline make about the nature of social and political reality, compares some of the key concepts each field employs, and provides

¹⁵ Mehta, Vipul (), “What is the Relationship between Political Science and Anthropology”, <http://www.publishyourarticles.net/knowledge-hub/political-science/what-is-the-relationship-between-political-science-and-anthropology.html>

an extensive review of the basic methods of research that “bridge” both disciplines: ethnography and case study. Through ethnography (participant observation), reliance on extended case studies, and the use of “anthropological” concepts and sensibilities, a greater understanding of some of the most challenging issues of the day can be gained¹⁶. For example, political anthropology challenges the illusion of the “autonomy of the political” assumed by political science to characterize so-called modern societies.

"Knowledge of social anthropology," says Robson, "is essential for the study or practice of colonial administration; and it is necessary also for several other special topics of political science, such as area studies, colour and racial conflicts, international organisations for assisting underdeveloped countries, immigration and emigration." Harold D. Lasswell approvingly cites C.D. Lerner and says that the links between students of folk society—the distinctive subject-matter of social anthropology and Political Science have been closer in recent years "as whirlwind modernization added to the turbulence of politics in Asia, Africa, South America, and many heretofore-isolated island communities." Anthropology has an inexhaustible source of data on every sphere of man and his culture and Political Science, as Robson says, "will draw on various parts of this repository as problems gain in their urgency."

Political Anthropology, which is now recognised as a fairly independent discipline, helps to solve the riddle of the failure of Western model of democratic institutions in these countries. The traditional elements, attitudes, values, patterns of behaviour and leadership weigh very heavily in the developing countries as compared with the more rationalised developed nations of the West and, consequently. The operational aspects of the democratic institutions can scarcely be understood in terms and manner familiar to the Western States. Bryce has aptly said that there are institutions which "like plants flourish only on their hillside and under their own sunshine."

Political Science and Geography:

¹⁶ Aronoff, Myron J and Jan Kubik (2012), “Anthropology and Political Science: A Convergent Approach”,

In a rapidly changing international environment, the issues of economic, political and social security are gaining prominence and in this context the tools of political science and geography are increasingly becoming important for understanding and analysing global problems and arriving at policy alternatives. The two disciplines have been associated through the sub-fields of political geography, which covers geographical differences in voting patterns, for example, and through geo-politics which examines how the great powers influence other parts of the planet. These days, in a context of globalisation, interdisciplinary understandings of socio-environmental issues are becoming increasingly key to solving the problems of the future such as political instability in parts of the developing world as a result of climate change, for example. Environmental politics, and the politics of the environment, are becoming ever more important.

