WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT (FROM PLATO TO MARX) (MPSE-003)

TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
Course Code: MPSE-003
Assignment Code: ASST/TMA/2025-26
Marks: 100

Note: Answer five questions in all, selecting at least two questions from each section. Each question is to be answered in about 500 words and carries 20 marks each.

SECTION – I

1. Discuss the relationship between political thought and political science.
2. Examine Plato's Theory of Ideas.
3. Elaborate upon Aristotle's methodology.
4. What is St. Thomas Aquinas's Grand Synthesis? Explain.
5. Write a note on Machiavelli's 'The Prince'.

SECTION – II

Write a short note in each of the following in about 250 words.

6. (a) Hobbes on the state of nature
   (b) Locke on Social Contract and Civil society

7. (a) Rousseau's Theory of General will
   (b) Critique of Edmund Burke

8. (a) Kant's formulations of the categorical imperative
   (b) 'The Panopticon'

9. (a) Tocqueville's views on Democracy and Revolution
   (b) J. S. Mill on women's rights

10. (a) Hegel's philosophy of History
    (b) Historical Materialism

1. Discuss the relationship between political thought and political science.

Answer

Political thought and political science deal with many of the same questions, but they approach them in different ways. Political thought studies the ideas through which thinkers have tried to understand the state, power, justice, liberty, equality, authority and the good political order. It is closely connected with the historical setting in which a thinker writes. Political science is the broader systematic study of political institutions, behaviour, processes and relations of power. It uses conceptual analysis as well as empirical methods such as observation, comparison and the study of evidence. The two fields therefore cannot be separated completely. Political thought gives political science many of its basic concepts and questions, while political science tests, compares and applies those ideas to actual political life.

Political thought as a historical and normative enquiry

Political thought is mainly concerned with ideas about politics as they develop over time. A thinker responds to the problems of his or her age, but the ideas often survive beyond that age because they deal with recurring political questions. Plato discussed justice and the ideal state in the context of the Greek polis. Hobbes and Locke wrote against the background of political conflict in seventeenth-century England. Rousseau examined freedom and political authority in the setting of modern civil society. Marx analysed capitalism and class relations in nineteenth-century Europe. Political thought therefore has a strong historical character: it asks how concepts have been understood, challenged and reworked from one period to another.

At the same time, political thought is not only a record of past opinions. It is also normative because it asks what ought to be. Questions such as what makes authority legitimate, what citizens owe to the state, what justice requires, or how freedom should be protected cannot be answered only by collecting facts. They involve values and standards of judgement. This is why political thought often combines description with evaluation. A thinker may explain an existing political arrangement and then defend, reform or reject it on the basis of a larger view of human nature, morality or social order.