CHAPTER I

AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND
THE STUDY OF POLITICAL THEORY

Neglect of political theory in the American political science is not a recent phenomenon. All through its history, American political science has either neglected political theory or handled it in a manner that hampered its growth. To comprehend this trend, one must analyse the socio-political atmosphere in which American political science emerged and developed as a discipline.

The emergence of American political science can be traced back to the later half of the nineteenth century. To be precise, it was only in 1880 that John W Burgess succeeded in establishing a separate school of political science at the Columbia University. This is not to suggest that prior to this event political matters were not studied at all in America. Upto 1880, courses in Philosophy, moral philosophy and ethics used to include some political matters; but there was no integrated course in political science.\(^1\) Bernard Crick observes that until after the Civil War political science

\(^1\) For a detailed discussion on the teaching of political science in America from 1636-1900 see Hanna Haddow, *Political Science in American Colleges and Universities from 1636-1900* (Appleton Century, New York, 1936).
scarcely existed as a subject in the teaching of American colleges. But over the years, the study of politics grew in size as well as in status and by the eighth decade of the nineteenth century it began to emerge as a discipline.

Reconstruction, reform and pragmatism:

These years of emergence of political science were the years following the civil war. The American society, in these years, was undergoing a phase of reconstruction. It was facing a series of crucial problems. As Nye and Morpurgo put it:

The southerner's problem was three fold: to adjust to a new set of social and economic conditions; recreate a new political society; and pick up the pieces (if he could) of a life shattered by war.

The north meanwhile was concerned with consolidating victory, retaining control of the federal government, and establishing economic and political authority over the conquered confederacy.

It was only natural that in a period of such drastic changes and reconstruction, the dominant section of the American society wanted to train its citizens to accept the new order and the values attached to it. As is evident from our discussion below, of the nature and scope of the American political


science during that period, this emerging discipline came to their help.

In the early stage of its growth political science was making use of political writings like The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the Federalist papers, Presidential addresses, State Papers, Texts of Judicial decision, famous speeches of statesmen and important editorials of newspapers and journals. All these formed the materials for the students of political science. This material was conducive to what Crick calls "the inaugural purpose of the American Political Science". Crick identifies this purpose as training people to become good citizens and training young men for public service. The discipline remained engrossed in these programmes of training and neglected the study of theory.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, American Political Science took a new turn. In this period American Society was undergoing a series of reforms. The general state of affairs were such that liberal thinkers became utterly dissatisfied with their crisis ridden society. To some of them the federal government appeared to be controlled by a privillaged few who ran it for the benefit of the rail roads, the banks and the manufacturing and mining corporations.

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This was the time when millions of men found themselves unemployed. The employed ones found that they could not make a living. The liberal thinkers held that there was something wrong with the system. What followed was a current of reformism in political thinking which was known as progressivism as well as populism. Civil Service reform, the direct election of Senators, electoral reforms, the reconstruction of municipal government, the initiative and referendum were the main themes of progressivism and populism. Since these trends dominated the American Society; it was no wonder that political science of this period was deeply involved in these currents. The main themes of progressivism and populism became a part of the political science of the time. These issues engrossed the discipline so much that theoretical issues remained neglected.

Pragmatism, the dominant philosophy of the period, also contributed to the neglect of political theory. The extent to which this philosophy influenced all the social sciences could be understood from the fact that, by the early twenties there


was scarcely a social scientist who did not consider himself to be in some sense, a pragmatist. To follow the pragmatic method", says Landau, "meant to look at social life as it really was, to attend to social institutions as they really looked, to find the how of things not the why." (emphasis in original). William James and Charles Sanders Pierce were the real founders of American Philosophic Pragmatism. Pragmatism is distinguished by its trial and error approach. James, for instance, says:

The pragmatic method is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable. Is the world one or many? fated or free? material or spiritual? — here are notions either of which may or may not hold good of the world; and disputes over such notions are unending. The pragmatic method in such cases is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences.

If pragmatism is a method of settling disputes by tracing their practical consequences then it is possible for it to overlook the moral and ideological implications of the issues involved in such disputes. This aspect of pragmatism is reflected clearly in the approach of the most influential American pragmatist John Dewey. His approach, instrumentalism, emphasises the practical consequences of issues and events. As Elliott


puts it:

... instrumentalism does not look to an evaluation of moral ends. It takes these ends for granted, as the 'datum of the specific social situation of every act. The acts themselves are to be tested only by the efficiency with which they attain the given ends.

Though pragmatism was a philosophy and had implications for moral philosophy, at the methodological level it did emphasize practical consequences. This emphasis made pragmatism refer to the usefulness, workability, and practicality of ideas, policies, and proposals as criteria of their merit and claims to attention. Pragmatism welcomed change and explained how to direct it intelligently. It supplied a general tool for the reformist thought of the progressive era. Like other social sciences political science also came under the influence of this philosophy.

The influence of Reformism and Pragmatism made citizenship training the 'raison d'être' of political science. As a result political science in the United States acquired an essentially practical character, in a narrow sense. It came to limit itself to the study of immediate problems which in turn stripped it of any long term perspective. It is only natural that a science motivated basically by such ideas would neglect theoretical thinking. This, of course, should

not create the impression that during this period there was no theoretical work at all. There, indeed, was a political scientist like A.F. Bently who paid considerable attention to the problems of a theoretical nature. Bently published his *The Process of Government* in 1908. He rejected all metaphysics and normative formulations. He criticized the barren formalism of the political science of his time and said that even a dose of metaphysics could not save such studies. Bently insisted that the proper study of politics was that of observable facts. Facts, according to Bently, must be studied in the context of the "group". He used the 'group' as the basic concept. The analysis of these groups was considered to be the main task in the study of any form of social life. He wrote, "When the groups are adequately stated, every thing is stated". He was of the opinion that if we could get our social life in terms of activity and nothing else, we had not indeed succeeded in measuring it, but we had at least reached a foundation upon which a coherent system of measurement could be built up. His approach does

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12. Ibid., p. 162.
13. Ibid., p. 208.
not neglect political theory totally, because the problem which Bently tried to tackle was itself a theoretical one. With the help of the concept of group he tried to explain the process of government as one in which the social policy is decided upon as a result of "push and resistance between groups". Merriam and Barnes said in 1924 that The Process of Government was regarded by many penetrating critics as the most notable American contribution to political theory. But in spite of the theoretical implications of his ideas the work of Bently remained by and large ignored by the political scientists of his time. Easton writes, "It is true that until recently Bently's work has had no discernible influence on the growth of American political science; reference to it does not begin until the twenties with the rise of interest group politics." Bernard Crick has also pointed out that for a long time Bently's influence remained obscure.

Thus, except for the isolated and ignored attempt of Bently American Political Science, during its formative period, neglected the study of political theory. In a period of major change and reconstruction the discipline remained

16. Ibid., p. 258
engrossed in the problems of reform and citizenship training.

The spell of Scientism:

In the inter-war period American political science came under the influence of Scientific method. Between the two wars the socio-political situation in America was rather complicated. The dominant section of the American society began to feel insecure. As Oscar Handlin puts it:

Although disaster did not come, there was a basis to the fear of respectable Americans. Social conditions were deteriorating to a point at which it was no longer safe to take the docility of the population for granted. Deepening class divisions were bringing the United States close to the tense revolutionary situation of the Europeans.\(^2\)

The dominant section of the American society wanted to avoid a major social upheaval. In their bid to save the situation they adopted a pragmatic approach to politics. Nye and Morpurgo puts the point shrewdly:

The point of politics, it was assumed, was to understand the actual operation of government, to study unwritten as well as written laws, to recognize the political importance of men and pressures and opinions.\(^2\)


\(^{21}\) Nye and Morpurgo, op. cit., p. 588.
There is a very strong conservative bias in this approach. If one studies only what in fact and actually happens one does not raise normative questions about the just or unjust nature of the system. However, what they tried to do was to save the situation. They looked up to science for this purpose. They tried to build a scientific method for the study of politics. This of course was understandable because to the early twentieth century science appeared to be the magic word — the key to the solution of all problems.

Early twentieth century was an era of scientific progress. The basis of this progress was the descriptive work of the Nineteenth century. A series of discoveries and inventions in the fields of physics, chemistry and medicine took place in this period. It seemed that the triumphs of science would bring knowledge and power in abundance. As a result prestige of science increased enormously and the effectiveness of the methods of science became almost an established fact. There is no wonder that social scientists, including political scientists, were enamoured by the scientific method.

By this time disciplines like Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology began to rise. Economics was already a discipline of status and recognition. Political scientists could

not ignore the fact that these disciplines were using methods which were considered more scientific. In their bid to be scientific they tried to build a science of politics on the lines of these disciplines.

Charles E. Merriam was one of the pioneers in this field. He was fascinated by the achievements of science. He was very critical of the political science of his time for its lack of scientific rigour. He urged the political scientists to use scientific methods to study the important forces of political and social control. He, in fact, felt that if political scientists failed to use scientific methods there would be a jungle of politics. He wrote:

What advantages shall we reap if science conquered the whole world except the world's government and then turns its titanic forces over to a government of ignorance and prejudice, with laboratory science in the hands of jungle governors? 23

Merriam hoped that science would help the political scientists to liberate government from the hold of ignorance and prejudice.

These ideas were not entirely new. We have already mentioned that psychology had already established itself as a 'Scientific' discipline. Some students of political life argued for application of scientific method in political science on the basis of their understanding of this method in

psychology. As early as 1908 Graham Wallas wrote:

I based my arguments on two facts, firstly that modern psychology offers us a conception of human nature much truer, though complex than that which is associated with the traditional English political philosophy; and secondly, that under the influence and example of the natural sciences, political thinkers are already beginning to use in their discussions and enquiries quantitative rather than merely qualitative words and methods, and are able, therefore, both to state their problem more fully and to answer them with a greater approximation to accuracy. 24

Wallas, thus, wanted political scientists to emulate the psychologists in the adoption of scientific method. He argued that a political science should be based upon quantitative methods and that serious attention should be paid to the psychological elements in political activity, including non-rational acts and the exploitation in political life of subconscious and non-rational inferences.

Similar views were expressed by Walter Lippman. He emphasized the importance of psychological elements in political activity. He argued that the state craft must take human nature as its basis. He was skeptical about the utility of self introspection as a tool of psychological analysis.

The method of introspection, he maintained was based on the assumption that the only experience we really understand is our own. He argued that experience had enlarged our knowledge of differences. We realized now that our neighbour was not always like ourselves. Knowing how unjust other people's inferences were when they concern us, we had begun to guess that ours might be unjust to them. Lippman, therefore, emphasised the role of observable psychological data in the study of politics.

Almost all the issues that Harriam raised about the scientific method in political science could be traced back to the writings of Lippman. Like Harriam, Lippman also held that statistical method would be helpful for political research. He emphasised the necessity of practical research and urged political scientists to direct their attention to practical politics. He wanted political scientists to do all this on the basis of facts. He appealed to the authority of facts as against reason. But to be really accurate Lippman was more concerned with technical skill rather than scientific method. This becomes clear from his views about the role of the social scientists. He argued that every complicated

27. Ibid., pp. 71-72.
community had sought the assistance of specialized men. The
Statesmen, the executive, the party leader, the head of a
voluntary association had found that if he had to discuss
two dozen different subjects in the course of the day some
body would have to coach him. Lippman pointed out, "Yet
curiously enough, though he knew that he needed help, he was
slow to call in the social scientists."  

In the hands of Merriam the same ideas became parts of a
passionate argument for the development of a scientific
method. The trend set by Merriam continued and in fact got
strengthened with the publication of a series of books which
emphasized the need for a scientific method in the study of
politics. G. M. C. Catlin published *Science and Methods in
Politics* in 1927. Stuart, A. Rice made a serious effort to
use quantitative methods in political science. His book was
published in 1928. In 1930 came Harold Lasswell's *Psychopa-
thology of Politics*. In this book, he tried to use
psychological categories for political studies. In a later

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29. Ibid., p. 71.

30. G. M. C. Catlin, *Science and Methods in Politics*, (Knopf,
New York, 1927).

31. Stuart, A. Rice, *Quantitative Methods in Politics*,
(Knopf, New York, 1928).

32. Harold Lasswell, *Psychopathology of Politics*, (Viking,
work he used the Freudian categories of the earlier work with his subsequent writings on power. William Munro saw physics as the proper model for a genuine political science. In an article, entitled "Physics and politics: An old analogy revised", he argued that the science and art of government still rests upon what may be called the atomic theory of politics- upon the postulate that all able bodied citizens were of equal weight, volume and value; enforced with inalienable rights; vested with the attribution of an indivisible sovereignty.34

The mood of these political scientists could be clearly understood from what Catlin wrote some three decades later. While restating his position Catlin said,

The best guide (for the politicist as touching this relation of politics and Psychology) is perhaps to be found in the outlook of that great and too little honoured man Graham Wallas, and in the pregnant remark of Lord Bryce ... in his Modern Democracies 1921: 'Politics has its roots in Psychology', certainly this was the understanding which H.D. Lasswell and myself had years ago.35


Thus, under the leadership of Charles E. Merriam a formidable group of American Political Scientists attempted to build a science of politics with the help of Psychology and quantitative methods. It is evident from the writings of Merriam that the purpose of this approach was to muster the forces of political and social control. Their works have been fruitful as studies of political behaviour and political motivations as well as of the actual working of political institutions. But these political scientists accepted the fact-value dichotomy and argued that it was not a proper function of political scientists to teach how to be good democratic citizens. They aimed at building up a value-free science of politics.

This position did not go unchallenged. William Y. Elliott, Edward S. Corwin and Charles, A. Beard pleaded against the possibilities as well as desirability of a value free science of politics. Elliott's *The Pragmatic Revolt in Politics* became very influential among some political scientists. It had been considered an appropriate counter to Catlin's *Science and Methods in Politics*. He was of the opinion that the general pre-occupation of political science

36. This position has been made clear by Catlin. See G.E.G. Catlin, *Science and Methods in Politics*, op. cit.

in U.S.A. with descriptive studies of institutions and with attempts to formulate and apply an objective and purely scientific method to political studies might be intimately related to the fact that there was not a single contemporary political theorist in America who was to be counted among those of the first order. Elliott's own study aimed at supplying an approach to what he considered the central problem of contemporary political theory. He held that the problem centered around the issue of fact-value dichotomy. He undertook his study with the conviction that separation of facts and values could not bring any fruitful results. He proposed to set all the problems of politics in their historical, economic and cultural environments instead of trying to work out a science of politics—based on abstractions. He insisted that facts are shaped and used as they are interpreted and, therefore, students of politics must not ignore the problem of political values. This book was a sharp critique of the current mood of the value-free political scientists. Elliott pointed out the weakness of that approach. He wrote:

The scientific method, to become a fruitful critique of moral values, must approach consequences themselves with this spider web

38. Ibid., p. 5.
39. Ibid., p. 51.
of coherent logic and normative values. Otherwise it remains merely positivistic, behaviourist, descriptive and morally blind.\textsuperscript{40}

But Elliott himself did not make an attempt to theorize in the normative sense of the term. In his own words his aim was, "simply to run a thread of unity through the chief modern theories and experiments which are in revolt against political rationalism."\textsuperscript{41} We have already pointed out that in the reformist phase of American political science, some political scientists wanted the discipline only to offer citizenship training; during the pragmatic era the followers of this school also opposed a value-free political science. Thomas. H. Reed, for instance tried to draw the discipline closer to the earlier purposes of citizenship education. He was of the opinion that political science should train students for political and governmental careers. He was a protagonist of civic education and activism. This view was clearly stated in a book published jointly with Doris D. Reed. The authors wrote, "The object of this study is to suggest subject matter and methods which can be employed profitably in promoting better training for participation in politics."\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., pp. 52-53.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. Vii

\textsuperscript{42} Thomas H. Reed and Doris D. Reed, \textit{Preparing College Men and Women for Politics}. (The Law centre of New York University, New York, 1952), p. 10. This study included a suggested syllabus for American citizenship.
Such suggestions were normative in nature. That is why Reed and his followers were also opposed to the concept of a value-free political science.

In this controversy over the desirability of a value-free science of politics no conclusive results were achieved. To quote Somit and Tanenhaus, "Though neither Merriam nor Reed captured the holy land, or came close to it both crusades left their mark on the discipline". These two groups of American Political Scientists opposed each other; but they had something in common too. Both of these groups either neglected the study of political theory or their approach to political science consequently resulted in a decline of political theory. One group was obsessed with methods and the other with citizenship training.

While this debate was going on and political theory was by and large neglected, a group of American political scientists took to the study of the ideas of the great political thinkers of the past. This trend was set by W.A. Dunning. He published his three volumes study entitled A History of Political theories in 1902, 1905 and 1920 respectively. In these volumes Dunning wanted, "to present the interpretation of the development of political theory in its relation to

political fact. Easton rightly points out, in Dunning's hand ..., the study of political theory is virtually converted into the history of political ideas and theories. Dunning gave us a historical account of the conditions and consequences of political ideas. Another author MacIlwain considered political ideas as effects of social activity. His Growth of Political Thought in the West, From Greeks to the Middle Ages was also a general history of thought. Macllwain's approach was different from that of Dunning in assessing this approach Easton says that

"It transfers the emphasis of history from a causal study of the contribution ideas make to the actual process of social change, as it has been conceived by Dunning, into an exploration of the historical conditions surrounding the emergence of an idea."

Unlike Dunning, MacIlwain attributed special significance to moral judgements; but he was led to history as the most meaningful mode of interpreting moral ideas. To quote Easton, "In spite of his undoubted conviction that it is worthwhile to affirm moral views, his conception of the role of ideas in general bars him from advocating anything other than a

47. David Easton, The Political System, op. cit., p. 244.
A third author who adopted a similar approach was George H. Sabine. In the words of Easton Sabine agrees with Dunning that "the examination of political thought merits attention because it is an aspect of the political process that interacts with and influences social action. With the latter (Macilwain) he maintains the necessity of describing and analysing the moral judgements in each theory." For Sabine every political theory could be examined from two points of view: as Social Philosophy and as ideology. Sabine accepted Hume's position on facts and values. Like Hume he holds, that no fact implies any other fact and no fact implies any value. Easton says:

In such a study we ought to isolate the influence of a theory on the actions of men; this is the psychological aspect. We can analyze the factual statements implicit in any theory and set them against the facts as we know them today. In this respect political theory is concerned with empirical truth.

In Sabine's approach moral inquiry helped only in historical understanding. Sabine did not encourage the students of

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49. Ibid., p. 246.
political theory to examine value-theory with a view to help him formulate his own moral outlook.

All these writers were textbook writers. Their role as such should be distinguished from that of political theorists. None of them tried to build any political theory themselves. Arnold Brecht makes this point when he says that, these writers had a tendency to look to the great writings as the main reservoir of theoretic effort. He maintains that in their hands the study of theory was mainly directed to criticism and evaluation of the contributions of other people. There was little effort to make the study of theory an exercise in theory construction. Easton, however, overlooks this distinction and goes on to explain that the approach adopted by these authors contributed to the decline of political theory. He calls it, 'Decline into historicism.' About these three authors he says that he has inquired into their approach because they are representative of research in this field. He goes on to say, 'Political theorists are primarily historicist in their orientation. They do not use the history of values as a device to stipulate thought on a possible constructive redefinition of political goals.'

54. Ibid., p. 253.
(emphasis added). It is clear that Easton calls them 'historicist' because their approach to values does not help one to constructively redefine political goals. The point about their treatment of values may be valid but does that make these authors 'historicists'? Like all other terms, historicism also has come to acquire a specific meaning through usage. Nobody has done more in giving to the concept of historicism its accepted meaning than Karl Popper, according to whom:

> historicism (is) an approach to the social sciences which assumes that historical prediction is their principal aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering the rhythms or the patterns, the laws or the trends that underlie the evolution of history.\(^55\)

None of the three eminent scholars mentioned above has anything to do with predicting the future. Probably what Easton meant was that they were applying a crude historical method. Easton himself shows that in their study of moral problems these authors turned to history largely for the sake of narration.\(^56\) In this sense their approach cannot be designated as 'historicist'.

One may not agree with Easton when he calls these authors historicist, but he surely makes a point when he says that their approach was partly responsible for a decline in


\(^{56}\) Easton, op. cit., p. 254.
the study of political theory. They studied ideas of past, examined their antecedents and tried to understand them by placing them in their own historical situations; but never treated political theory in a manner which can increase our understanding of the world present and future. In fact implicit in this approach was a withdrawal from the present. In the interwar period American political scientists were confronted with a tense socio-political situation. They responded to it in two ways: while some of them tried to use a 'Scientific method' to acquire mastery over the social forces so that those could be controlled and the society could be saved from a crisis, others withdrew to the study of ideas of the great thinkers. Both of these trends neglected the study of political theory. The first emphasized technical skill, the other withdrew to the past.

The rise of Behaviouralism: A positivist view of political science

In the post war America also the state of political theory did not improve. The victory in the war was accompanied by a series of problems both economic and political. The black market had flourished during the war and its activity increased with peace. The price level established by law remained relatively stable, but the actual costs paid by consumers soared. The businessmen could pass the increases on to the helpless consumers; but the
labourers felt the pinch of higher cost of living. Yet their demands for higher wages met the determined resistance of the employers. Faulkner shows that there was a desire to adopt a tough policy towards labour. A fear of dissenters and radicals prevailed in the atmosphere and there was a general swing towards the right. If the American Social Scientists of this period had tried critically to examine the situation they would have found it necessary to raise normative questions regarding the system. Instead of doing this they decided to eschew normative questions and took refuge in what was called a "value-free social science". The philosophical basis of this already existed in logical positivism.

It was in this period that pragmatic philosophy suffered a setback and logical positivism started gaining ground. Logical positivism with its emphasis on the fact-value dichotomy suited those American social scientists of this period who had a status-quo bias and wanted to avoid fundamental questions of a normative nature. Logical positivists insisted on strictly "physicalist" or behaviouralist methods. They wanted elimination of metaphysical terms in all phases of research. They wanted to designate any statement which was not verifiable through perception as not only "non-scientific" but also meaningless. This does not mean, however, that they

58. See, Brecht, op. cit., pp. 174-75.
entirely neglected values. But these they were concerned with as individuals. As social scientists they felt that they were only concerned with facts.

All these ideas were founded upon the methodological position of fact-value dichotomy. According to this position statements about facts should be separated from statements about values and the subjective preferences of the observer. Associated with this is the idea of value-relativism — the idea that derived. These ideas were central to the rise of behaviouralism also. Easton, a leading exponent of Behaviouralism, argued that it shifted the balance of concern from prescription, ethical enquiry, and action to description, explanation and verification. He explained that "Behaviouralism has justified this shift on the grounds that without the accumulation of reliable knowledge, the means for the achievement of goals would be so uncertain as to convert action into a futile game."60

The pioneers of Behaviouralism in political science were highly critical of traditional political science which followed a historical, legal or normative approach. They pleaded that to acquire reliable knowledge political science must develop more fruitful modes of analysis. These arguments

59. See, Ibid., pp. 117-118.
started as early as 1908. Graham Wallas and A.F. Bently were pioneers in this field. Wallas emphasized the importance of psychology and Bently drew the attention of the discipline to the process mode of analysis. In 1913 Beard argued in the *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* that the constitution grew out of definite group conflicts. These path-breaking studies were by and large ignored by the contemporary political scientists because the discipline at that time as we have already noted, was engrossed in matters of practical importance. Arguments on these lines were carried on by authors like Charles E. Merrian, Harold Gosnel, Harold Lasswell. These works had their effect on the discipline. In 1950's these books gained currency and Behaviouralism established itself firmly in political science. As Vandyke has pointed out, "A behavioural approach is distinguished pre-dominantly by the nature of the purpose it is designed to serve. The purpose is scientific." The behaviourists view of science is value-free. Heinz Bulau says, "It is

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the function of science to understand and interpret the world not to change it." The implication is clear. If the scientist endeavours to change the world he will have to make value judgements; if he merely interprets he can afford to remain value-free. Eulau, further, states that the great issues of politics such as the conditions and consequences of freedom, justice or authority are admittedly significant topics; but they are topics compounded with a strong dose of metaphysical discourse. He does not think that they are beyond the reach of behavioural investigation; but before they can be tackled the groundwork must be laid. This task of laying the groundwork oriented the discipline to factual research. As a result the normative questions became almost out of bound for behavioural political science. The urge to build a science of politics seized the minds of the American political scientists in such a manner that they sought to emulate the natural sciences in building what was conceived to be a field of knowledge anchored in facts. Such an approach cannot be fruitful in social sciences including political science, because it ignores the qualititative uniqueness of the social form of movements and developments. In fact it glosses over the differences between human society and the world of nature.


65. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
Moreover, if one attempts to develop a field of knowledge enchaired in facts one is necessarily confined to those aspects of social and political events that lend themselves to precise description, repeated observation, quantification, and other such objective treatment. This leads to trivialization of political science. A Political Science that depends solely on facts and factual knowledge could afford to neglect political theory. This view of political science which Easton later called "hyperfactualism"66 siphoned away energy from seeing the facts in their theoretical significance.67 As a result the development of political science was seriously affected. Vandyke rightly says that this purpose of scientific work is surely among the obstacles to the development of a science of politics. The strong tendency has been simply to gather facts and to write and teach for the sake of facts. In this way, under the influence of behaviouralism post war American Political Science fell into the abyss of hyperfactualism.

The behaviouralists were not completely blind to the dangerous aspects of this trend. Some of them did take pains to explain that they did not ignore the question of values.

66. Easton, op. cit., p. 66
67. See, Ibid., pp. 77-78.
Hulau says:

It does not follow that science cannot investigate preferences, values, or policy objectives because it cannot tell us what good is best or what action is just. I do not believe that these things are any more inscrutable than more mundane matters of political behaviour.  

It would, therefore, appear that these scientists do take values into consideration; but their actual position becomes clear when we notice that in practice they try to leave the questions of value alone. Hulau argues that the goal is man; but like a true behaviouralist he refuses to say what kind of man. He writes, "these are philosophical questions better left to the philosophers. Whatever answer one chooses, there is likely to be a corresponding predicament."

This reluctance of the behavioural scientists to deal with such questions emanates from their belief that it is not possible to make final judgements about human values. Hulau, for instance says,

The question of whether a value-free science of politics is possible must not be confused with the question of whether a value-free science is desirable. The former is a problem of fact that in the end can be answered only through empirical research into the nature of science as a form of human activity. The

71. Ibid., p. 144.
later is a problem of value that will remain open as long as scientists themselves give different answers. I think it will remain an open question for generations to come" (emphasis added). 72

here he is arguing that since the possibility or impossibility of a value-free science is a question of fact its truth could be empirically verifed; but desirability is a question of value and therefore could not be empirically verified. Balau and others like him are interested in building a 'Science of Politics' based on empirical investigation. The positivist view of social sciences led behavioural political scientists to a study of facts for the sake of facts themselves, and as a result political theory remained neglected during the post war American political science also.

Our discussion above shows that since its inception in the post civil war period American Political Science has travelled through the stages of reformism, pragmatism, scientism and Behaviouralism. In all these stages of development American Political Science neglected the study of political theory. The discipline was engrossed in practical problems of training citizens, suggesting reforms or collecting facts to build a science anchored in facts. Critical Political thinking in America prior to the emergence of American political science came from men like Madison.

72. Ibid., pp. 146-27.
Hamilton, Paine and Jefferson. Even after the emergence of political science critical thinking regarding political matters have been there. But the discipline of political science has failed to develop any political theory worth the name. It is, therefore, difficult to accept Easton's contention that there was decline of political theory in America. In fact, the study of political theory in American political science never really took off. The roots of the neglect of political theory in American political science, as we have tried to show, could be found in the socio-political atmosphere in which the discipline emerged and developed. One may not agree with Easton on this point, but one must appreciate the fact that he was one of the few political scientists who emphasized the need for a serious study of political theory. Easton hoped to win back for theory its proper and necessary place. In the next chapter we examine Easton's treatment of political theory to assess his contribution in this direction.


74. Ibid., Vol. III.