CHAPTER V

T.S. Eliot's Political Ideas

T.S. Eliot's political ideas, in reaction to the prevailing political theories, try to seek better foundation of values for society. Disillusioned with the liberal democracy, Communism and Fascism, he feels that these theories conceal the real issues of civilisation. According to Eliot, the real issues of contemporary society are religious cultural issues, confronting society at large. The theorists of liberal democracy, Fascism and Communism repose power on the State for solutions of all social problems. Contrary to this Eliot thinks that social problems do require more than economic and political solutions. Therefore T.S. Eliot is concerned with the perfection of man's whole way of life rather than the material efficiency and progress of society. For this change of attitude his political ideas, as conscious endeavour, are directed not at conventional governmental and mechanical solutions but "to a State of society that demands what he has to give and will give his sufficient resources to enable him to carry on his work."
Eliot distrusts the State as the sovereign organisation and at the same time does not believe the anarchist idea of Stateless society. Neither does he believe in liberal democracy which he thinks breaks down the traditional social order.

In spite of enormous achievements of science, everyone feels that the vast body of culture, of which religion is the main component, is rotting. Culture, in Eliot's own recognition as the way of life is the only course of safeguarding society from decadence.

For establishment of a better social order and formulation of an ethical standard for the people, the Church as the organisation of values, according Eliot is more important than the State which fetters society with shackles of law and material power. The organisation of the Church together with an enlightened section of society, the 'elites', will create a social condition favourable to healthy society. This social position leads him to believe that at the bottom of all political and economic crises lies the necessity for cultural and religious control and balance of society.
In this chapter I propose to discuss Eliot's political ideas with special reference to his social writings in the Criterion and elsewhere, particularly in 'Notes Towards the Definition of Culture'. 'The Idea of a Christian Society' and 'To Criticise the Critic' and other writings.'

It is important to understand the contemporary social and political situation of Europe in the context of Eliot's political ideas and therefore let us begin with it.

In Europe the early twentieth century has seen the breakdown of the old familiar authoritarian pattern in private and social life. The democratic social trend, which had prevailed for a long time also seemed to go bankrupt. The rise of radicalism had in the meanwhile considerably affected social and political thinking about relationship in society for nearly a century. The empirical, sceptical spirit of science also played a large part and helped in the dissolution of old social mores.
The international environment following the first world war and the changes in the economic atmosphere especially, the evolution of the socialist power in the U.S.S.R. on the basis of the Marxist political economic theory which sees man as the product of economic and social forces, had a far-reaching influence on thinking about society.

Such changes led to the rise of anti-democratic movements whether Socialist or Fascist. These movements undermined the central position of the individual in liberal thought and generally demanded the establishment of an authoritarian order. But while socialists demanded dictatorship for the good of the proletariat the Fascist demand for dictatorship was based on the notion of human inequality and the superiority of nation to class. While the Fascists wanted the state power to be the sovereign authority, the anarchists on the other hand demanded a stateless society. They thought that political authority was unnecessary and unjust and the or-
ganised religious authority as equally evil because a good life is possible not in an organised State, but in a social condition in which man and woman are able to act freely according to natural instinct. There were sharp reactions against the socialist concept of classless society and the anarchist "Stateless" society among the educated section of English people, more particularly among the conservatives.²

There had long been a conservative, anti-liberal tradition in Britain. The typical attitude of conservatism, as formulated by Burke was a reaction against the eighteenth century rationalism and the doctrine of natural rights and utilitarianism. The political conservatism (of Burke in particular) wanted a "respect for the wisdom of established institutions, especially religion and property, a strong sense of continuity in its historical changes and a belief in the relative importance of individual will and reason to deflect it from course, and a keen moral satisfaction in the loyalty that attaches its members to their stations in its various rank."³

Critics of this conservative view held the epi-
union that there was nothing in the nature of man or in the history of human society that compels blind respect for traditional forms or mystic dogmas which disguised vested privileges and inherited injustices. Rousseau's "Social Contract" and Thomas Paine's "Rights of Man" are some of the most significant documents of changing political and social ideas. The societies governed by a democratic system were considered to be better than those under Aristocracies and Monarchies.

The main political movement of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries supplied illustrations of an apparently democratic trend. At the close of the Napoleonic wars, there was one limited monarchy (England) one small and moderate democracy (Switzerland) in Europe, and one democracy (U.S.) in the western hemisphere. During the succeeding century ending with the outbreak of the World War I popular government was widely extended all over the world.

The English political theorists at the beginning of the twentieth century were in the context of deve
lopping capitalism confronted with several allied problems, namely to seek a theoretical justification for continued state of action for social welfare, to integrate socialism into the framework of liberalism, just as a hundred years before the philosophical radicals sought to integrate the seminal notion of democracy as a tenet of liberalism and to explore the implication of democracy and liberty in a highly differentiated social order.  

Forces of anti-democratic ideas began to be active to exploit the weakness of a democratic society in the early 20th century. In France a counter-revolutionary force was trying to re-establish a powerful, hereditary kingship in the country. Leon Daudet, Charles Maurras and Jacques Bainville were the notable spokesmen of this movement. The programmes of the royalists included a unique admixture of centralisation of political authority, devolution of administrative function and ecclesiastical autonomy for the Roman Church. They thought that the destruction of the privileges of the corporations of the old regimes was one of the greatest crimes of the French Revolution. They
wanted the abolition of the Parliament and wanted the Crown to take all major decisions. By bringing about these changes they wanted to restore "French politics to that lofty plane where public power and influence is the rightful heritage of those who, through blood, tradition and training, are the chief possessors of political wisdom." 5

Those who respected the monarch sought other foundations for authoritarianism. The theoretical justification of dictatorship had been set forth most extensively by Mussolini and the other spokesmen for Italian Fascism as an organised movement to control the policy of Italy, and it had its origin at Milan, on March, 1919, in a small meeting summoned by Benito Mussolini. The meeting formed a 'Fascio di Combattimento' (Fighting Band) and adopted a programme of vigorous action designed both to secure for Italy the fruits of her victorious part in the war and to set up certain changes in the domestic policy of the nation. The main ideas of Fascism are that the nation is more important than any or all of the members and that the public interest must
always predominate over any sort of private interest.

(liberty etc.) They believe in political aristocracy
and autocracy. "Liberty", "Equality" and Fraternity
have been substituted to, "Responsibility, Discipline
and Hierarchy."

As reactions to the concept of dictatorial
or monarchical and democratic type of society many in
England and else where also advocated an aristocratic
form of political government in which every community
should adopt or have imposed upon it some system for
putting its best members into governmental office, there­
by forming a class of its own for the development of
society. The idea of 'elite society' intermingled with
ethical consideration is found in the writings of T.S.
Eliot and in the writings of Eliot's American teacher
Irving Babbitt. Eliot's concept of 'Elite' is charac­
terised by "intellectual and spiritual conduct on a
higher plane" and his political ideas are marked by a
bias for cultural aristocracy which sharpens his autho­
ritarian and anti-romantic political position.

In the light of the contemporary political
theories it may be said that much of the impetus for the development and use of the concept of social control comes from the sociological adaptation of the Darwinian tradition. There, however, the major dichotomy was between organism and nature; for the various theories of social control, on the other hand, the dichotomy has been between the individual and society. It is assumed in these theories that society has to control the animal nature of man; if order is to be maintained and established, Man's tendency to pursue his self-interest must be limited through learning or selection or both. Emergence of the concept of social control thus indicated a waning of the utilitarian concept of the natural harmony of self-interests.

Social institutions are usually conceived of as the basic focii of social organisation common to all societies and dealing with some of the basic universal problems of ordered social life. First, institutions (i.e. state, Government etc.) deal with some personal basic problems of any society. Secondly institutions in-
volves the regulation (law, convention) of behaviour of individuals in society according to some definite, continuous and organised pattern. Thirdly the pattern involves a definite normative ordering and regulation; that is, regulation is upheld by norms and by sanctions which are legitimised by these norms.7

In the attempt to justify the aims of society, modern social movements typically resort to abstract principles concerning the nature of man, his destiny and his natural right in combination with a critique of the existing economic, political and cultural institutions. The most typical forms are either a detailed, rational plan for a new society, a utopia or as in the case of Marxism, a theory of history which predicts the inevitable coming of the new society without revealing its form in detail. Characteristic of these thought systems is their inherent logical consistency, their reliance on mono-causal explanations of major social problems, and their tendency to believe that changes in social institutions will bring final solutions to all hu-
In the light of the above discussion it is seen that T.S. Eliot's political thought is neither a detailed plan i.e. utopia nor an historical analysis for bringing about peace to society through changes. But Eliot's social thought contains political ideas which advocate establishment of a different social order and for solution of social problems. His concept of a Christian society is a bold step in that direction. Further, he too is concerned in his own way with the nature and destiny of man.

There are certain noteworthy aspects of Eliot's political ideas:

1) Man's basic nature as base and mean and Eliot's consequent belief in the theory of 'Original Sin'.

2) Social organisations, individuals, family, state etc. should be guided by some moral sanctions and discipline. According to Eliot, the Church and the State can play a very significant role but none of these
two organisations will enjoy sovereign authority. Neither will sovereignty be reposed in people.

iii) An enlightened section of society, like those of 'philosopher kings' of Plato are expected to lead the unenlightened section of society. And unlike the professional politicians the enlightened few will help establish a social order which is at once culturally healthy and morally developed.

iv) Writers should not see all social problems primarily as political or economic problems. Eliot intermixes all political and economic problems with cultural religious problems of society.

Crucial to T.S. Eliot's political ideas is his concept of Man's Basic nature. Eliot is not a misty-eyed idealist and he is prepared to accept human folly and depravity as part of political reality, out of his conviction of the reality of 'Original Sin.' Eliot's essay 'Niccolo Machiavelli' (1933) has a central relevance to his political thought.
According to Machiavelli man is a creature of insatiable desires and limitless ambitions. And man's essentially evil nature is a raw material that may be moulded and conditioned by leadership and social organisation. Machiavelli thinks that desirable characteristics can be imprinted on Man's original nature by education. Therefore, unlike other traditional critics of Machiavelli, Eliot does not believe that Machiavelli is anti-Christian, rather he finds in Machiavelli's unflattering picture of human life and human nature a confrontation of the Christian doctrine of 'Original Sin'. Thus Eliot achieves support for his authoritarianism from Machiavelli's picture of human depravity and imperfection.

The principle of order is embodied for Machiavelli in the state for creating conditions for man's security and well-being and that function is served in Eliot's view by a society guided by the Church. It is important that Eliot recognises the need for some social organisations to control the 'animal nature' of man.
How we come to the second aspect of Eliot's political idea and in the light of his concept of State, Church and 'Order' discuss what was Eliot's political philosophy in trying to form a cultural religious social order.

First of all why did Eliot repudiate the prevalent currents of contemporary political thought? Let us try to answer this question in the light of his ideas about 'liberalism', 'democracy' and 'communism' currents of thought which at that time dominated political discussions. T.S. Eliot is a traditionalist and his concern being "to form the future, we only form it on the materials of the past, we must use our heredity instead of denying it." Eliot's primary concern being the future of society where individual's virtues and well-being would be secure, he confronted the demerits of the liberal democratic and communist notions of society.

According to Eliot the concepts, liberalism, democracy and communism are inimical to the English tradition and society. He thinks that 'Liberalism' may
destroy the traditional social habits and may dissolve their natural collective consciousness into individual constituents. "Liberalism can prepare the way for that which is its own negation: artificial mechanised or brutalised control which is desperate remedy for its chaos." He thinks that liberalism and conservatism are both repellent and neither of them is enough to guide society because they are not philosophies but some habits only:

"In religion, liberalism may be characterised as a progressive discarding of elements in historical Christianity which appear superfluous or obsolete, confounded with practices and abuses which are legitimate objects of attack. But as its movement is controlled rather by its origin than by any goal, it loses force after a series of rejection and with nothing to destroy, is left with nothing to uphold and with nowhere to go."
The attitudes and benefits of liberalism are destined to disappear because, according to him liberalism is merely a habit and therefore it cannot lead us to a positive way of life.

"In the nineteenth century the Liberal party had its own conservatism, and the conservative party had its own liberalism; neither had a political philosophy."

It is true that liberalism is an expression and it helped the development of industry and was satisfied with a short-time operation of demand and supply. It was unmindful of the consequence of industrialism and believed that "progress" is possible only through technical and material advances. It allows free competition and helps the bourgeoisie accumulate wealth at the cost of traditional order of society. It serves individual interests and considers the State to be the guardian of freedom and therefore Eliot thinks that it is a negative element: "Conservatism is too often conservation of the wrong things; liberalism
a relaxation of discipline; revolution a denial of the permanent things." 14

According to Eliot, after liberalism we are left with democracy, a term which for the present generation, still has a liberal connotation of freedom. Eliot accepts that a democracy is the best possible aim for society but what Eliot needs "is not merely form of government, but a common ethos, a common way of responding emotionally, even common standard of conduct in private life." 15 Eliot does not like to limit his concept of democracy to a particular political end. He tries to see democracy from a theoretical and philosophical stand-point. He says: "The essential of democracy is that there is no total rule; for total rule means that somebody is in control of affairs about some of which he is totally incompetent." 16 Eliot thinks both liberalism and democracy are away from 'something' and they may lead us to some thing very different and unfamiliar to the tradition and can help us arrive at nothing positive at all.

In the absence of a superior ethical standard a democracy may sometimes work very badly: "a democracy
worth of the name seems to me a democracy of human beings, not simply of formal systems but much depends upon the citizens and those whom they choose to represent them. There may be a lack of accord between the formal institutions and the ethos of the Particular people that operates them; and for this reason and perhaps of corruption amongst those who make politics a profession, or indifference or ignorance or prejudice or ill-regulated emotions, among the public, a democracy can sometimes work very badly.  

Eliot thinks that democracy is incapable of fighting against the destructive forces of modern society. The general merit of democracy is that it can protect individual freedom and liberty but, according to T.S. Eliot, "totalitarianism can retain these terms, "freedom" and 'Democracy' and give its meaning."  

The doctrine of democracy, to some extent rests upon a belief in human equality and equal opportunity but Eliot considers it to be an unrealistic creed. On the contrary he believes in the imperfectibility of human nature; and the natural inequality of man.
T.S. Eliot's repudiation of communist ideology is a complex affair. It demands a close examination of the Criterion commentaries most of which were written after the communist success in the U.S.S.R in 1917. Consistent also with the same ideas in his later works. He identifies three important elements in communism: "Observed facts, respect for what appears to be the most, or even the only scientific theory about them, a pleasurable emotions of a religious type. These elements fortify each other to a very high degree and are with difficulty distinguished."  

He acknowledges that communism is at least "a respectable political theory with its own standard of orthodoxy." But Eliot contradicts the acceptability of Economics or political economy as a "Science".  

"The trouble with the science of Economics of today is that it appears in a form in which very few people, if any, can understand it." And the science of economics is incomplete without the "Scientific authority of Ethics."
Eliot repudiates 'historical materialism' or 'economic determinism' as incomplete and thinks that this is possible only by a rigorous selection of elements within a restricted limit of time. "And this selection is also a selection of values, and any narrow adherence to one set of values, tends to be a menace. If your values are religious, then you may say that it is better that a million bodies burn rather than one soul."23

Eliot seems to be preoccupied herewith his political ideas. His conversion to Catholicism in 1927 is a marked step in the making of his political ideas. In the commentaries of the Criterion, Eliot's political commonsense on the contemporary political debates are directed to the preconceived religious ideas. It is from this standpoint that he sees the Communist or Fascist political ideology.

According to Eliot, communism which is antagonistic to capitalism is the culmination of capitalism and "a communist regime might merely perfect the work of the capitalist regime."24
As far as the issue of religion as an organisation of values is concerned, Eliot thinks that communism is ludicrous and repulsive and religion is not the opium of society. In The Idea of a Christian Society he says that he has "Dislike for everything maintained by Germany and/or Russia". According to communist ideals human civilisation is developed or its direction changed by material forces. Communists believe in the doctrine of determinism which is antagonistic to Catholics.

Again Eliot thinks that attainment of materialist efficiency is a lower ideal and it will help create a 'mob' rather than good citizens but Eliot believes that the ideal of society should not be confined to a short-term ideal like those of a democracy or communist society: "The Catholics should have high ideals - or rather, I should say absolute ideals — and moderate expectation: the heretic, whether he calls himself fascist, or communist or democrat or rationalist always has low ideals and great expectation."26

As a Catholic it is natural on the part of T.S.
Eliot to oppose Marxist philosophy which believes in the political economy of society and supports the theory of "construction" rather than "growth": "the victory of the left will be the victory of the worst rather than of the best feature; and ends in something called communism, that will be a travesty of humanitarian ideals which have led as many people in the direction." 27 Another reason why Eliot hates the materialistic efficiency i.e. the materialistic philosophy is that he thinks the materialistic efficiency based on materialist philosophy will create bodies of man and woman detached from tradition and religion.

At the root of his repudiation of the existing political ideas stands another important reason i.e. a need for ideas, which he thinks neither the communism ('at least a respectable political theory') 28 nor democracy nor Fascism can supply at present. But "in times like ours we need ideas, not only our own but antagonistic ideas --- against which our may keep themselves sharp. 29 Eliot insists that political ideas must be evolved from
some permanent principles. In the absence of these perma-
nent principles communist and secularist ideas are becoming,
at least in Eliot's understanding weak and they tend to
serve short-term and material purposes of society. He says
that "Communism is also a religion but they are concerned
only with the temporal world." 30

He acknowledges that a change of the temporal
world is necessary and it "must change by dialectical
necessity." 31 But a thorough-going change of economic
system will tend to "alter the whole structure of society,
to affect our private behaviour and moral prejudices." 32

But this change in material world is not enough
because it is destined to stop somewhere." Economic chanes
desirable or necessary in themselves will probably
lead to the disappearance of classes; I see no reason for
believing that either class or classlessness is desirable
in itself." 33

If a class-society by way of any revolutionary
change assumes the form of a class-less society then no
further change will be necessary or possible. But Eliot thinks that the progress of mankind is to continue as long as men survive upon this earth and therefore progress becomes change "for the values of man will change and a world of changed values is valueless to us—just as we being part of the past, will be valueless to us."34

This change which is merely progress must not be always in terms of material change: "politics means more than prosperity and comfort; and if it is to mean even that; it means the social aspect of "Good life."35

This politics for 'good life' has become too serious a matter to be left to politicians"36 and involves the fundamentals of his political ideas. Merely a form of government is not enough for 'good-life' we need an "impulse capable of disciplining the individual and at the same time increasing his possibilities of development as an independent member of society."37 The independent member of society is a "natural man who must not be subordinated to the political economy. He must look beyond that.
Eliot's problem is that the present democratic, communist and even Fascist ideas cannot lead man beyond a certain point. This is why he considers the real issue of our society to be the "issue between the secularists -- whatever political or moral philosophy they support, and the anti-secularists." 38

Eliot belongs to the camp of anti-secularists who believe that human values are realisable only out of time and politics needs profound moral conviction. And even political economy will fail "until it recognises the superior scientific authority of ethics." 39 And therefore he needs another Ruskin. 40

In 'The Wasteland' and other poems of the post world war I period we find the reflection of degeneration of humanity and life without a direction. Eliot feels the present society needs a direction and therefore a new political thought is needed; but it is already said that new political philosophy should not be a mere political practice because, according to him Russian communism and
Italian Fascism have already died and are incapable of any direction in becoming political facts."

In an essay, "Catholicism and International Order" which was published in 1928 and later included in the "Essays — Ancient and Modern" he says that the new political philosophy must be capable of moral guidance of people for 'world order' rather than "false-goods."

"...that our spiritual faith should give us some guidance in temporal matters; that if does not the fault is our own; that morality rests upon religious sanction, and that the social organisation of the world rests upon moral sanction; that we can judge of temporal values in the light of eternal values." 41

Fleet emphasises the belief that a Christian world order is the only foundation of political philosophy that can work.

Later in 1939 also he continues to preach the same view: "... the only possibility of control and balance
is a religious control and balance; that the only hopeful course for a society which would thrive and continue its creative activity in the arts of civilisation, is to become Christian.⁴²

As opposed to a secular social-political ideology Eliot wanted the nucleus of his political thought to be the Christian theology which according to him alone is capable of searching analysis both of the problems and solutions put forward by politicians. He says:

1. The ordinary politicians may identify themselves with any particular form of government, and therefore the politicians will be subordinated to the authority of the state.

2. The "practitioners of both political and economic science, in their very effort to be scientific, to limit precisely, that is the field of their activity, make assumptions which they are not entitled to make, but which they are not always conscious of making."⁴³

3. The non-Catholic or the non-Christian philosopher, Eliot says, feeling no obligation to alter himself,
and therefore no cogent need to understand himself, is apt to be under the "sway of his prejudices, his social background, his individual taste." 44

4. Eliot warns that we should not be left with the ordinary politicians whose wisdom is identified with expediency. And political wisdom, according to him cannot be abstracted to science and also it cannot be supplied by "forming a committee composed of scientists and dodgers in equal numbers." 45

We have already discussed above that Eliot reacted against all the current political doctrines and considered the socialist, democratic and communist ideologies to be incompetent and rather inadequate to develop the good qualities latent in "man". But will religious control and balance, as has been envisaged by Eliot to be the only positive way, be able to supplant the gap created by society?

Let us look at his remedies:

1. "A really satisfactory working philosophy of social action, as distinct from devices from
getting ourselves out of a hole at the moment, requires not merely science but wisdom."46

2. And this wisdom involves a historical sense, too, which is connected with the conservation of traditional good things i.e. "what is the best life for us not as a political obstruction but as a particular people in a particular place; what in the past worth preserving and what should be rejected; and what conditions, within our power to bring about, would foster the society that we desire."47 And secondly through observation and experience of men and women as they live.

3. T.S.Eliot hopes that the classical conception of wisdom, 'the great repository of wisdom',48 is connected both with human and the divine wisdom. And this wisdom is obtainable only through the authority of Christian religion.

Eliot's firm belief is that political morality must evolve from religion" which recognises the place of
A Catholic having the recognition of this authority is under an obligation to improve 'man' according to the definite ideals and standards.

Thus far it is clear that T.S. Eliot's political thought is an extension of his religious thought:

"He (Eliot) discarded popular ideologies of social change — extremist politics and liberal optimism — as solution to cultural despair, and offered as an alternative the idea of community knit together by religious discipline."50

Eliot also did not support the Fascism which Mussolini advocated in Italy. According to Fascist doctrine the state is absolute and it is above everything. But T.S. Eliot did not consider that the state should enjoy absolute power because the state as a sovereign political organisation may suppress man's natural virtues.

While looking at Catholic political philosophy Eliot realised: "It is a matter of regret that England has no contemporary and indigenous school of political thought since Fabianism, as an alternative to it. The
function of political theory is not to form a working party, but to permeate society and consequently all parties. And according to Eliot Fabianism had done, for good or bad something for perpetuation of values in England. But "a new school of political thought is needed, which might learn from political thought abroad but not from political practice." Time and again Eliot expresses his hostility to 'political practice' and he endeavours to find out solutions to the political problems in his theory of ideal society through a sanctified religious organisation. Let us now discuss Eliot's concept of state and its relation to religion through the Church. In the already discussed essay on Machiavelli Eliot says that Machiavelli, 'the exemplar of a Mussolini and a Lenin' was always occupied with his moral or spiritual values in relation to the state. But according to E.S.Eliot Machiavelli "is opposed neither to religion nor to the Catholic Church". But "he maintained steadily that an established Church was of the greatest values to a State."
And in the light of Machiavelli’s ideas about religion in relation to state Eliot says: "It is quite possible that an established national Church such as the Church of England, might have seemed to Machiavelli the best establishment of a Christian Commonwealth; but that a religious establishment of some kind is necessary to a nation he is quite sure."^56

As far as the concept of state is concerned Eliot’s principal argument is that the state and the Church should be equally responsible for all social matters but neither of them should enjoy absolute power. In the essay on Machiavelli Eliot suppresses a very important aspect of Machiavelli’s political concept of the state i.e. Machiavelli says that a society develops not by the will of God but owing to natural causes and therefore the driving forces of history are material interests and power. But Eliot thinks on the contrary that development of any society is organic and it cannot be determined by material forces.

His concept of ‘state’ by which Eliot means
a Christian state, is unlike a Fascist or Communist state having absolute power and authority for itself. Eliot believes that power and authority should be outside the individual or above people but it should not be also absolutely with the State. He relates the authority of the state to the authority of the Church. The Church of a Christian society represents the traditional form of Christian beliefs and worship of the great mass of people. His firm belief is that without the Church of England with its religious social life Christianity would be impossible in England. The Church has the authority in matters of dogma, matters of faith, and morals and there may be sometimes differences of opinion between the State and the Church; and in such cases the Church will have the final authority and will solve disputes with the help of the intellectuals and the scholars. Eliot says that the conflict between the two is desirable as any dynamic organisation should change as time demands. But the position of the Church should always be defensive and it should keep itself alive and keep its doctrine pure.
And Eliot is convinced that "you cannot have a national Christian society, a religious social community, a society with a political philosophy founded upon the Christian faith. If it is constituted as mere conglomerates of private and independent sects. The national faith must have an official recognition by the state, as well as an accepted status in the community and a basis of conviction in the heart of the individual."  

The Church in an Eliotian society should be a national Church with its local, traditional and environmental affiliations. It should be a nationalistic Church which has the danger again of preaching a nation's prejudices and superficialities. The Church of England may, Eliot fears, spread its own racial bias in the name of a national Church as the missionaries sometimes do. The relation of an individual should be to the national Church which is itself a part of the Universal Church. He clearly demonstrates that an individual will have dual allegiance to the State and the Church. For his temporal life he should look to the State and for the spiritual
life to the Church but everywhere in a Christian society the individuals should pay importance to the Church more than the State.

The problems of religion, politics and culture run together in Eliotian society and these problems cannot be seen in isolation. The important question at this stage is the authority of permanence which alone can, Eliot thinks, give human life some semblance of dignity and nobility essential for the maintenance of order and consistency in a society. According to Eliot this authority of permanence and social order is the Church through which he has found the traditional ideas an appropriate vehicle for many of his political ideas.

Eliot's firm belief is that social order cannot be maintained by mere political and economic actions: it is possible only through cultural unity in religion. No amount of economic or political unity can maintain a social order: "you can put a variety of savage beasts together in one cage, and tell them that they must tolerate each other and share their food equally: or they will perish."
Unity and equality other than a cultural unity in religion will be inhuman.

Eliot’s political idea is conceived in relation to culture and its best reflection is found in the fourth chapter of ‘Notes Towards the Definition of culture’. There are two assumptions made here: 1. conscious political endeavour to plan and subordinate culture 2. and culture as the unconscious back-ground of politics.

1. According to Eliot modern political theories are less concerned with human nature and it is fashioned to fit whatever political form is regarded as most desirable. This is why they suffer from certain inherent drawbacks.

i) They tend to form minds which will see things only in terms of impersonal and inhuman forces, and thereby to dehumanise its students.

ii) They separate ethics from politics.

iii) “Modern political thought inextricably involved with economics and with society, pre-emptst to
itself the position of queen of the sciences.

For the exact and experimental sciences are judged according to their utility, and are valued in so far as they produce results — either for making life more comfortable or less laborious. 59

iv) In this process culture of society is considered as a by-product or a department of life.

Under the circumstances, referring to Leon Trotsky's essay 'Literature and Revolution' which speaks of cultural direction by conscious political ways as a total way of life of the world, Eliot writes that this process of political direction of culture will result in chaos and discontent rather than of unity. Any conscious effort of political direction of culture, like those of Russians and the British administrators in India will disintegrate the local culture because political dominance and superiority without religious unity will produce adverse result.

The second assumption of culture as the unconscious background of politics implies that there is
a connection between politics and culture but it is not the conscious efforts of any political authority that can give guidance in matters of culture of society.".... The practice of politics as an active interest in public affairs would not be the business of everybody, or of everybody to the same degree."60

Eliot's considered view about social organisation, thus seems to be that all social organisation should be guided by moral sanctions derived through the Church and enlightened section of society rather than the state as political organisation.

This brings us to his concept of society in relation to the role of the leaders -- the politicians, in the Eliotian sense, the 'elite'.

Eliot's concept of society is that every society involves different levels of power, Eliot writes:

"I incline to believe no true democracy can maintain itself unless it contains these different levels of culture-- The levels of culture may also be seen as
levels of power, to the extent that a smaller group of a higher level will have equal power with a lower group at a lower level; for it may be argued that complete equality means universal irresponsibility in such a society as I envisage, each individual would inherit greater or lesser responsibility . . . . each class would have somewhat different responsibility. 61

Eliot's understanding of 'level' or class of society is of great importance in his scheme of society. Undoubtedly he is against the idea of a classless society and for him the realisation of such a society is politically unviable. His charge against Karl Mannheim is that Mannheim mixes up the 'class-culture' with what is the culture of society as a whole — the class itself possesses a function that of maintaining that part of the total culture of society which pertains to that class. We have to try to keep in mind, that in a healthy society, the maintenance of a particular level of culture is to the benefit, not merely of the class which maintains it, but of society
It is true that every level or class has its own identity whether it is a political or cultural identity but the contradiction seems to be that the political or cultural interest of a certain level cannot be shared by another level equally and the interests may differ.

Different people, he thinks, will take different role according to the levels or grade of society. In a regional society public affairs will be the business of everybody or of great majority but within very small units. In a stratified society all will not be responsible equally for public affairs; greater responsibility will be inherited by persons having inherited special advantages and these persons should cohere self-interests with public interests. And these elites consist of "those whose responsibility was inherited with their affluence and position and whose forces constantly increased and often led by rising individuals of exceptional talents. But when we speak of a governing elite, we must safeguard ourselves against thinking of an elite sharply divided from the
One of the chief notions of his political ideology seems to be that the governing elite, the man of action must be closely associated with people of different areas of activity, thought — scientific, artistic, philosophical, and religious. Without this contact between man of action and man of thought a society according to him will be in danger of disintegration.

Fliot is also aware of the fact that there will be different political elites with different levels of power and authority and therefore he suggests a common accord of religious thought among them. Political wisdom is also necessary for them: "It is always desirable that part of the education of those persons who are either born into, or qualified by their abilities to enter, the superior political grades of society, should be instruction in history and that a part of the study of history should be the history of political theory." Fliot prescribes the study of Greek history and Greek
political theory for its manageability. He desires human passions in political education rather than brute and inhuman forces in man.

Eliot conceives of state as a Christian society under the aspect of legislation, public administration, legal tradition and form. And all the three elements of Christian society i.e. the Christian community, the Community of Christians and the church are characterised by Christian belief.

In this way his political ideas are marked by his deep-rooted conviction of the place of Christian morality in the creation of a Christian society. It is not a society in the modern political sense according to which state, government and people are bound by material interests rather than spiritual power.

Though Eliot does not say that the State should preach state-religion, he holds that the educational system should not be under the pressure of the government, instead it should be influenced by the Christian philosophy of life, Eliot insists on the under-
lying political philosophy not of a party but of a nation characterised by continuity, coherence and reliable behaviour which is developed through Christianity. While the greater section of people i.e. the unenlightened masses will remain passive to this political philosophy the enlightened few will consciously draw on the chariot of social peace and progress.

It is important that Eliot distrusts the modern concept of political party and he thinks that members of society should not be loyal to the political parties; members may surrender their judgment to a Church however difficult it may sound but to surrender individual responsibility to a party is a "pleasant stimulant and sedative" and it will disturb the individual progress in the long run.

Now we come to the third aspect: the role of man of letters as far as the political and social affairs are concerned. Perhaps he does not think of himself as an ideologue, but only as a man of letters. It is important to note that Eliot does not believe that all
arts carry primarily a social obligation but at the same time "a man of letters is not, as rule, exclusively engaged upon the production of works of art." A man of letters has other interests, like anybody else, interests which will, in all probability, exercise some influence upon the content and meaning of the works of art which he does produce. He has the same responsibility, and should have the same concern with the fate of his country, and with political and social affairs within it, as any other citizen.

According to him a "man of letters, as such, is not concerned with the political or economic map of Europe; but he should be very much concerned with its cultural map." He is afraid that mere political and economic aspect of life will give birth of two fatal tendencies: (i) economic industrialism and political authoritarianism; (ii) Regionalism.

It is true industrialism tends to centralise the direction of affairs towards the needs of the manufacturer and it is indifferent to the growth of
cl culture. Likewise authoritarianism in its haste to centralise power in the name of progress diminishes the interest and control of local affairs. As a reaction to this political and economic development the regional forces may emerge. Citing the example of European industrialism Eliot says that the demand for greater local autonomy in Scotland or in Wales is a protest against this tendency of political centralism. In the light of the present industrialism and political centralism in India, Eliot's fear does not prove wrong. The regionalist movements seeking regional and local autonomy in present India may be attributed to be the cause of political and industrial centralism in India.

Eliot is in favour of cultural regionalism and is hostile to political centralism but at the same time he is aware of the weaknesses of the regionalist movements in Europe. Regionalism, as a political device to combat the political centralism, according to Eliot is a superficial remedy. As a man of letters
Eliot prescribes a remedy to cure the so-called political disease of Europe. In his own words: "The man of letters, who should be peculiarly qualified to respect and to criticise them, should be able to take a longer view than either the politician or the local patriot. He should know that neither in a complete and universal uniformity, nor in an isolated self-sufficiency, can culture flourish; that a local and general culture are so far from being in conflict, that they are truly necessary to each other."

Eliot sees dangers either in complete separation or in complete unity of culture because in both the cases there is a political design at work. Eliot's main thrust is that a man of letters, as he is "should know that uniformity means the obliteration of culture, and that self-sufficiency means its death by starvation." The cultural and political assumptions central to his works raise some questions: What according to Eliot is the relation between politico-economic and cultural problems of society? And can culture remain
independent of political pressure? Will cultural solutions help solve the economic and political problems?

To the first question Eliot's answer is that "The world's real problems are in practice a complex, usually a confusion, of political, economic, cultural and religious considerations; in one or another situation, one or more of these will be sacrificed to the one which is, in that situation, the most compulsive; but every one of them involves the rest." 71

In answering the second and the third question, Eliot holds the view that cultural problems cannot remain independent of political action but at the same time political solutions to the cultural problems will not work. Because as far as cultural problems destined for a better social order, are concerned, they are purely organic and cannot be constructed by political or economic organisations. To protect society from cultural decay and economic and scientific destruction by privileged
interests, Eliot suggests that a man of letters should not ignore politics and economics but "he should be vigilantly watching the conduct of politicians and economists, for the purpose of criticizing and warning, when the decisions and actions of politicians and economists are likely to have cultural consequences." *\(^2\)

From this standpoint Eliot's political ideas appear to be superior to those of party-politicians and power mongers. Yet such an idealist view is bound to be hindered by political reality. Whatever be the consequences, Eliot's political ideas are based on the idealist foundation of cultural and religious convictions.

T.S.Eliot's political ideas come under severe criticism from different critics. Among others Albert Nordell in his "T.S.Eliot's deficiencies as a Social Critic' describes him as a 'reactionary' and 'semi-fascist'; P.R.Harrison in his 'The Reactionaries' and R.H. Robbins in 'The T.S.Eliot Myth' note that Eliot's political ideas are reactionary and 'Clerice-Fascist'. In 'Culture and Society' Raymond Williams also observes that Eliot's
political ideas are fragmentary with the exclusion of the economic factor from the class.

According to Harrison, Robbins and Mordell, Eliot's political ideas are characterised by his sympathy for Fascism. Mordell says that as far as the Criterion Commentaries are concerned he "was expressing a semi-Fascist point of view that was later given much attention."75

Roger Kojecy, in "T.S. Eliot's social Criticism," seeks to defend Eliot against this charge of Fascist inclinations and he notes Eliot's own lines from the debate in 'The Times Literary Supplement', Aug 23, 1957 in which Eliot declares that the essay 'Literature of Fascism' does not give any ground for support to Fascism.

"When another Correspondent cited the remarks he had made in February 1928 apropos of the Fascist British Lion, Eliot replied by placing the remarks in their context, which emphasised that any value the movement might have derived from tenets which in retrospect..."
are not Fascist: support of the king, the constitution, the British empire and the Christian religion." 

The essay under reference 'The Literature of Fascism' appeared in the Criterion, Sept. 1928 and in the February (1928) issue of the Criterion he wrote about the 'British Lion' the organ of the British Fascist. These two essays together with other commentaries in the Criterion are of great importance for understanding his ideas about Fascism.

According to Eliot the cardinal points of the British Fascists are their support to the King, his heirs and successors, the present constitution, the British empire and the Christian religion. And these aims of the Fascist are "Wholly admirable". We would only suggest that "the British Lion might very well uphold these things without dressing itself up in an Italian collar."

As far as the issue of political representation is concerned he thinks that the Fascist ideas may be excellent but it "would hardly square with the
present constitution, which the lion is sworn to defend. It seems unfortunate that a rationalist organisation should have had to go abroad for its name and its symbol.  

Later in the same year Eliot comments that the "Fascist revolution is more Italian than Fascist" and the singularity of Fascism is that it began with no ideas at all, or rather an offshoot of advanced socialism, and proved itself capable of transforming itself as occasion required, and of assimilating of ideas as required.  

Eliot says that he does not notice in Fascism any important element except that 'it is benevolently organized about'. Most of the elements of Fascism, Eliot states are there in the ideas of Charles Maurras and according to Eliot Maurras' ideas are closer to England than those of Fascism. Of course, there are two differences between Maurras' concept and Fascism: First, the Maurrasian concept insists upon the importance of continuity by the King-
ship and hereditary class but Fascism does not give any importance to these institutions. Secondly, the aim of Fascism is centralisation but the theory of Action Française carries decentralisation to the farthest possible point.

Between these, the Maurrasian concept of political ideas and Fascism Eliot feels that "the situation of England is nearer the situation of France than it is to that of Italy." 80

It is clear that Eliot rejects Fascism for it lacks intellectual value and it has become a political fact rather than political thought but yet his rejection of Fascism as a political doctrine does not seem total. Because some of his remarks in connection with Fascism and Action Française are ambiguous: For example in the same essay under reference he says:

"But on the other hand, I could not find in Fascism any idea of general interest which has not already been expressed by Maurras and his friends. I end by reflecting that the developments of fascism in Italy..."
may produce very interesting results in ten or twenty years.*81

Now it goes without saying that some of the ideas of Fascism are already expressed by Maurras whose political thought is digestible to England. There are certain similarities between Fascism and Eliot's political thought:

(A) Fascism and Eliot believe in an authoritarian order of society.

(B) Both of them believe in human imperfectionability.

(C) Both of them are antagonistic to parliamentary form of democracy. Whereas Fascism seek to sacrifice the individual liberty and right on the alter of the State, in the name of 'nationalism', Eliot seeks to sacrifice them on the staircases of the Church for values.

This precarious political position of T.S. Eliot will make one believe that he is nearer an extreme righ-
tist political centre. It is true that the essay "The literature of Fascism" does not give a sound basis for his sympathy to fascism and on the basis of that it is
very difficult to accuse him of "tentative and ema-
[redacted] flirtation with Fascism." But at the same
time, taking into consideration his whole political
ideas it is more difficult to portray him as an anti-
fascist.

Fliot's rejection of Fascism does not read
him to secularism which is the modern political credo
at present. On the other hand Fliot detests secularist
forces i.e. the parliamentary democracy, election and
to some extent private or individual liberty.

First, according to Fliot "a rational govern-
ment would be one which acted for itself in matters con-
cerning which 'the people' is too ignorant to be consul-
ted..." Fliot insists on the centrality of govern-
ment, establishment of continuity in central policy and
liberation from the humbug of pretending to act upon
public opinion.

Secondly, he does not favour the role of a
political party. Though the role of political parties
is of great importance in a democracy Fliot considers
the loyalty of individuals to a party as a 'Sweet intoxication' which retards individual thinking.

Thirdly, he does not favour a popular representative government. Because "To have one fifty-thousandth part in choosing a representative (or whom one may know next to nothing) who himself will have only a small part in indicating the nomination of a Prime-Minister who will himself be obliged to choose his cabinet for various reasons, is a very poor kind of 'self-government' for a human being put in the world to form his own character and work out his own salvation." 84

Eliot repudiates the role of the above mentioned secular organisations and he even ridicules the election as an 'undesirable luxury'. He thinks that any secular political theory will run the risk of being merely expedient. In this way he belongs to the camp of the anti-secularists who cannot break down the barrier of mediavelism.

As far as the exclusion of the economic
aspect in his political ideas is concerned Raymond Williams in his "Culture and Society" notes, "Eliot's account of the development of the classes is not, when historically viewed, such as will give us complete confidence in his subsequent reasonings .... In particular the exclusion of the economic factor — of the tendency of function to turn into property — leaves the view of class narrow and misleading."\(^85\)

According to Williams, the emergence of functional groups i.e. the merchants, the industrial capitalists had altered Eliot's scheme of society, because, at a stage function can become divorced from property and in another stage the maintenance of money become a new function. Williams is of the opinion that when new economic functions emerge with their appropriate classes by way of accommodation or inheritance, it becomes misleading to equate class and function or even to posit any consistent relation between them.\(^86\)

In defence of Eliot's exclusion of economic factor from his social ideas Roger Kojecky in "T.S. Eliot's Social criticism" states, "The main cri-
lticism Williams made is from the opposite side of the political spectrum to Eliot's. He wished to take more account of economic aspects of society and disputed the conservative concept of a free economy. He believed that change can be at once radical, culturally integral and human.  

It is wrong to say that Eliot excluded the economic factor from his scheme of society. Time and again he says that economic and political elements are necessary elements but according to him more important is the cultural unity and this unity cannot be attained by means of economic equality or political authority. Because economic or financial inter-dependence and political power bring about inhuman forces subordinating individuals to brute forces. Eliot does not wish that culture of society should be subordinated to this parochial and brute force of the economists and the state. Eliot thinks that economic factors are necessary but the authority which controls it and is realisable through the evolution of a culturally en-
lightened section of society is indispensable.

Kojecky's defence against Williams criticism is not very strong. Because economic and political aspects of society are not ignored by Eliot. Economic factors like other factors of society will be under the control of the elites whose business will be to promote harmony and order in society. What he says, as far as economics is concerned, is that economics or political economy must be fettered by moral principles or it will be "an unearthly ballet of bloodless categories."

It is still a mystery whether the economy of society will be controlled by politicians or economists will determine the politics. There will be a lack of accord if both are allowed to play their own parts separately. Under such a condition Eliot's elites may serve society better but the fear of concentration of power in the hands of a selected few will still remain.

Eliot's main contention that economic and political problems must be dealt within the limit of
cultural assumptions does not hold much merit. It is true Eliot does not agree that political action is not a primary concern for society because he thinks that human civilisation is not only material but also, and principally moral.

Contrary to these ideas modern man is subject to technological and inhuman economic necessities which is working as an organised political system, and modern democracy is becoming an embodiment of the sovereign will of the people in the machinery of a bureaucratic state, which is not ready to accept Eliot's Christian humanism as its guiding principle. This system, as we have already said, has its defects. But it has also made it extremely difficult to implement Eliot's ideas.

Eliot's political ideas as the product of his search for revitalisation of the Christian religion through Christian theology and Christian education demonstrates without ambiguity his conservative and reactionary position. He entrusts power of control of society to the Church
and the State (Monarchy) which in the Middle Ages often suppressed all thought or struggle against feudal order. His love for tradition, religious dogma and opposition to a liberal democratic society are in the same strain.

Eliot distrusts the representative form of government and is indifferent to the sovereign will of people for major political decisions. This is consistent with his political thought. It is true the present political ideas are not above limitations, but Eliot’s remedy for these limitations is equally disastrous. Eliot’s prescription of the supernatural authority or asceticism to combat social ills is handicapped because it can neither hear nor can talk nor can see. But it is the success of Eliot’s political ideas that it can still stimulate our search for a third alternative.
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