

Various Notions of The State

Lecture: 4

2nd Grade

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VARIOUS NOTIONS OF STATE

State has been viewed differently by **different political thinkers**. The State is a **historic entity**. During the course of evolution of political philosophy different notions of State have emerged.

A brief discussion of these notions of the State follows:

VARIOUS NOTIONS OF STATE

1. Ethical Notion of the State.
2. The Legal Notion of the State.
3. The Power Notion of the State.
4. State as a Natural Institution.
5. State as a Divine Institution.
6. State according to Liberal Thinkers.
7. State according to Marxist Thinkers.
8. The Totalitarian Notion of the State.

1. Ethical Notion of the State

Plato and Aristotle regarded the State as representing the **highest form of human life** and looked upon it as an institution which made the virtuous life possible. They saw in the State the necessary agent(factor, cause) **for the ethical and intellectual(rational, logical) more than the material element.**

The ethical notion was further developed by Rousseau, Hegel, Kant and Green. State is a necessary ethical and natural institution. **It fulfills our various needs and requirements.** It is an association of association and supreme association. It is an ethical institution. **It embraces the whole of the human being.**

Aristotle said “the State has come into existence for life and exists for the sake of good life. **The State is an end itself because it is a perfect institution.** The State is the highest morality. It is necessary for all-round(general, total, many sided) development of man. It is within a State that man **achieves moral excellence** by performing his duties and enjoying his rights.”

Hegel endowed the State with a real personality and a will. He identified the will of an individual with the will of the State. He regarded collective person, a majestic(great, glorious) being.

2. The Legal Notion of the State

Bodin, Hobbes, Bentham and Austin interpret the **State as a legal structure**. It was formed for making, interpreting and enforcing law. It creates laws and norms **in order to regulate human behaviour**. It has coercive powers in the case of 'violation of laws'.

The legal notion regards the state as a legal person having a **distinctive(unique, special) personality and will of its own**. As a legal personality it harmonises (reconcile) activities of the various members of Society.

3. The Power Notion of the State

Machiavelli is the main exponent of power notion. When individuals came into contact with one another, it is but natural that **conflicts and contradictions may arise in society**. To resolve these conflicts and to maintain peace and harmony in society **there is a need of power** - a power which uphold(support, to maintain) the common good of the people.

The State is the **power to cope with(deal with) the demands of the individuals** and to resolve the contradictions in society. Some thinkers also hold the view that it is not correct to say that the State restricts the freedom of individuals. Freedom in society is born out of the rules which every society maintains. In the absence of the rules the security of the person is endangered.

1. Intellectual = rational, logical
2. Agent = factor, cause
3. Fulfills = achieves
4. All-round = general, total, many sided
5. Majestic = great, glorious
6. Existence = being
7. Performing = acting, to do

8. Enforcing = applying
9. harmonises = reconcile
10. Distinctive = unique, special
11. Contradictions = opposition
12. Uphold = support, to maintain
13. Maintain = =
14. cope with = deal with

Thanks