



Introduction to Public Policy

Week 3

Parsons, 1995: 41-54.



Philosophical Frameworks of PP

- The philosophical contributions to PP
 - Ethical
 - Normative
 - Methodological
- Concern with policy and problems is a central aspect of political philosophy



Philosophical Frameworks of PP

- Seven groups of philosophers, whose work influenced the analysis of PP
 - Machiavelli and Bacon
 - Bentham and Mill (Utilitarianism)
 - James and Dewey (Pragmatism)
 - Rawls and Nozick (Two theories of justice)
 - Popper (Piecemeal engineering model)
 - Hayek (Markets and individual choice)
 - Etzioni (Communitarianism)
 - Habermas (Communicative rationality)



Machiavelli and Bacon

- Machiavelli (1469-1527)
 - Policy as cunning and deception
 - Policy is the strategy by which goals are achieved
 - Right or wrong policy does not matter, successful outcome is the real source of legitimacy
 - Interested in the relationship between ends and means
 - Criteria to judge those who govern:
 - Success, performance, getting results



Machiavelli

- Those in power need to understand how power works
 - Good-quality information and its interpretation are crucial
- General conclusions on the nature of human behavior and institutions' influence can be drawn
 - Governing is a craft (statecraft) and its study is a science
 - Through knowledge of politics and power, better government is possible



James Burnham

- “The Managerial Revolution” book (1941)
 - Power shifting towards managers
 - The managerial elite replacing capital owners
- Many important social problems are very probably insoluble
 - There are limits of scientific progress
 - This can not be told to the general public



Machiavelli and Bacon

- Bacon (1561-1656)
 - Examined policy in its modern sense
 - Rational course of action based on knowledge
 - “Knowledge is power”
 - The exercise of power required sustaining balance, authority and legitimacy
 - An elevated & powerful role for policy experts
 - The “New Atlantis” book



Machiavelli & Bacon: Similarities

- First-hand experience of politics
- Self-gain motive of policy intellectuals
 - Unemployed after many years of government service & trying to get a job in government again
- Positivism
 - Sought to discover the fundamental forces/laws that govern politics and policy
 - It is possible to acquire scientific knowledge in order to make better policy
- Inductive reasoning
 - From individual cases to rules/laws



Machiavelli & Bacon: Differences

- Policy as
 - Sustaining power by cunning and deception (M)
 - Building support and agreement (B)
- Historical context
 - A time of struggle between princes in and around Italy (M)
 - A time of building consent and agreement in England (B)



Bentham & Mill (Utilitarianism)

- Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)
- James Mill (1773-1836)
 - “The greatest happiness for the greatest number” principle as the foundation of individual and governmental actions
 - How to calculate pleasures and pains?
 - The source of cost-benefit analysis
 - Search for quantifying and modeling human welfare



Bentham & Mill (Utilitarianism)

- Criticisms against Utilitarianism in PP
 - Policy reform as the promotion of greater social welfare and individual freedom.
 - Does it ignore moral issues as well as questions of equity and fairness?



James & Dewey (Pragmatism)

- William James (1842-1910)
 - Pragmatism as a call for action for social science to make the world a better place.
 - Ideas help people to modify their environment so as to survive and develop.



James & Dewey (Pragmatism)

- Different types of philosophers
 - Tough-minded philosophers
 - Use of empirical knowledge (Induction?)
 - Tender-minded philosophers
 - Deriving ideas from abstract thinking (Deduction)



James & Dewey (Pragmatism)

- John Dewey (1859-1952)
 - Pragmatism as a method of social experimentation
 - A form of “trial and error learning”
 - Democratic decision-making as a model of communication and experimentation



Rawls & Nozick (Two Theories of Justice)

- John Rawls
 - His book, “A Theory of Justice” (1971)
 - A model of justice, which involved fairness
 - Fairness in outcomes
 - Equality of opportunity



Rawls & Nozick (Two Theories of Justice)

- Social & economic inequalities are acceptable only when they are maximizing the benefits of the least advantaged.
 - Similar abilities- similar life chances
 - Recommends state intervention



Rawls & Nozick (Two Theories of Justice)

- Robert Nozick, “Anarchy, State and Utopia” (1974)
 - A powerful critique for the Rawlsian policy-making
 - Distributive justice is not realistic
 - Attacked on `entitlement` and `individual rights`
 - Individuals and markets are the better ways of organizing
 - Less public policy (government intervention) and more individual freedom of choice



Karl Popper

(Peacemeal engineering model)

- Two contributions to PP
 - Methodological contribution
 - Challenged the validity of the Baconian idea of science as induction
 - The observation of facts from which theories and general laws may be deduced



Karl Popper

(Peacemeal engineering model)

- Advocated making political decision-making approximate scientific problem-solving
 - Falsification
 - The setting out of conditions in which theories could be falsified
 - Facts/problems do not exist independent of theories (unlike positivists claim)



Karl Popper

(Peacemeal engineering model)

- Implications for empirical social science (and the natural sciences) were immense
 - Scientific theories were those which could be disproved
 - This left social science with a questionable kind of scientific status
 - “General theories that claim to have reached a final truth or knowledge are dangerous to an open society”



Karl Popper

(Peacemeal engineering model)

- All theories are tentative, and it is of the nature of knowledge to be conjectural.
 - Knowledge progresses by a process which give rise to tentative theories, subjected to tests of falsifiability, out of which new problems emerge.
 - Social progress takes place as a result of cycles of trial and error experimentation (Peacemeal engineering model)
 - Policy making with a critical, open, experimenting spirit (incrementalism)
 - Limitations of knowledge and human institutions



Hayek (Markets and Individual Choice)

- Books: “Road to Serfdom (1944), “The Constitution of Liberty” (1960)
 - His ideas became influential in late 1970s, at the end of the Keynesian Era
 - One of the leading source of ideas for the emergent “new right”
 - Critical of empirical objective knowledge
 - Human knowledge is very limited and fragmented
 - Society is not a product of human design, it is a spontaneous order



Hayek (Markets and Individual Choice)

- The ability of government to aggregate and coordinate information to make decisions that interfered with individual choice and markets is limited
 - Such actions are both erroneous and dangerous, leading in its extreme to the evils and inefficiency of authoritarian/ totalitarian regimes
 - Advocated limited government
 - Emphasis on individual choice, markets and rule of law



Hayek (Markets and Individual Choice)

- Appreciation of the politics of ideas
 - Importance of promoting ideas through organizations
 - Founded one of the first think-tanks
 - The Mont Pelerin Society, 1947
 - Inspired the establishment of many others



Etzioni (Communitarianism)

- Amitai Etzioni
- Historical Developments in PP
 - 1960s and 1970s
 - Rawlsian “fairness of outcomes”
 - 1980s
 - Hayekian individualism and markets
 - 1990s
 - Rise of communitarianism



Etzioni (Communitarianism)

- Renewal of the idea of community
 - As an alternative to the state centralism of 60s and 70s and the individualism of 1980s
- Arguments
 - Modern atomised societies have lost their sense of community and social solidarity
 - The social fabric between the state and the individual has withered under market individualism. It must be protected and rebuilt.
 - Schools, families, churches, trade unions...
 - Too much emphasis on rights, not much on duties
 - A new emphasis on individual and mutual responsibility



Etzioni (Communitarianism)

- Communitarianism as a framework of PP making
 - Pointing to the middle way between the excesses of state regulation and the reliance on pure market forces
 - A scaled-back but strong welfare state should be maintained
 - Other tasks should be turned over to individuals, families and communities
 - Principle of subsidiarity
 - The unit that is nearest to the problem needs to solve it.



Habermas (Communicative Rationality)

- Jurgen Habermas & Michel Foucault
 - The role of reason in human affairs
 - Criticism of the use of rationality as forms of control and oppression
 - Critical approaches to PP analysis
 - Instead of rational analytical techniques, Habermas proposes an alternative model of “communicative rationality”



Habermas (Communicative Rationality)

- Reason is reaching understanding in social context
 - Not concerned with objective proof or falsability
- Living together but differently in shared space and time
 - Finding agreement on how to address our collective concerns
 - Construction of mutual understanding



Habermas (Communicative Rationality)

- Implications for PP Analysis
 - The need for a greater attention to language, discourse and argument
 - Search for new analytical methods & institutional processes to promote the communication of societal actors during PP making