

IDEALIST THEORY OF STATE

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MAJOR EXPONENTS OF IDEALIST THEORY OF STATE

- **Immanuel Kant(1724-1804)**
- **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel(1770–1831)**
- **Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882)**
- **Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)**
- **Bernard Bosanquet (1848–1923)**
- **Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762—1814)**
- **Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896)**
- **John Bernhardt (1921-1963)**

Basic Principles

- **The state is an end and the individual is a means.**
- **The individual can have perfect existence only in the state.**
- **Idealistic theory vests absolute power in the State and regards State as an ethical institution.**

Different identities of Idealist theory

ABSOLUTIST THEORY

- **This theory vests absolute power in the State and regards the State as an ethical institution.**
- **Accordingly it believes that state is infallible**
- **It describes the state as an omnipotent authority**

PHILOSOPHICAL THEORY

- **This theory explains the state's nature in philosophical terms. Its earliest trace is found in the writings of Plato and Aristotle.**
- **Both of them regarded the state as a natural and necessary element.**
- **They propagated the notion that the state is a self-sufficient entity which is identical to the whole of society.**
- **In modern times Idealism was started from Germany by Immanuel Kant. But his concept was glorified by Hegel.**

METAPHYSICAL THEORY

□ **Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that examines the fundamental nature of reality, including the relationship**

- **between mind and matter,**
- **between substance and attribute,**
- **between potentiality and actuality.**

Metaphysical Idealism

Metaphysical Idealism postulates that material objects do not exist only in perceptions.

- **The state is the actuality of the ethical Idea.**
- **The state has its independent will and personality.**
- **The state is responsible for the development and welfare of an individual within the state.**

IMMANUEL KANT(1724-1804)

- **Kant provided the absolute power to state.**
- **The state was omnipotent, infallible and divine in its features.**
- **Its authority came from God.**
- **State was moral or ethical institutions**

IMMANUEL KANT(1724-1804)

Kant promoted the theory of private property. He rejected the extreme individualistic doctrine of property as untenable. According to him, the property was necessary for the expression of man's will. It was a derived right.

IMMANUEL KANT

- **Kant laid much stress on the rights and duties of an individual. Rights were complementary to moral freedom.**
- **Kant advocated for the monarchical form of government.**
- **Kant advocated world peace.**

GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL (1770–1831)

- **The most systematic of the post-Kantian idealists, Hegel attempted to define state as the embodiment of God on earth**
- **Hegel glorified the state which stood for the collective will of all.**

HEGEL

- Liberty of the individual can be ensured only by passive obedience of all to the laws of the state which has a personality of its own.
- Hegel was the champion of the establishment of totalitarian state.
- In the words of Hegel- “The state is an entity over and above the people who compose it with a real will and personality of its own.”

Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882)

- The state should foster and protect the social, political and economic environments in which individuals will have the best chance of acting according to their consciences.
- *The state should intervene only where there was a clear, proven and strong tendency of a liberty to enslave the individual.*
- The ultimate power to decide on the allocation of such tasks should rest with the national state

Thomas Hill Green

- The ultimate power to decide on the allocation of such tasks should rest with the national state
- The national state itself is legitimate to the extent that it upholds a system of rights and obligations that is most likely to foster individual self-realisation.
- Green actually proposed idealist revision of liberalism.

BOSANQUET (1848–1923)

- **Bosanquet's idealist social and political philosophy was written in reaction to the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, and to the natural-rights based theory of Herbert Spencer.**
- **Bosanquet argued that it was necessary to abandon the liberal commitment to individualism.**

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762—1814)

- **A bridge between the ideas of Kant and Hegel.**
- **He also wrote Political Philosophy, and is thought of by some as the father of German Nationalism.**
- **Fichte is the prime philosopher of freedom.**

FICHTE

- **Following Kant and Rousseau (by way of Kant), Fichte conceived of freedom as self-legislation or autonomy, thereby joining self-determination and self-limitation in the free enactment of the rule of reason.**
- **Religion ultimately then rests upon the practical reason and satisfies the needs of man**

Idealist Notion of Transcendence

Idealist political theory was closely related to metaphysics, and held that social relations and institutions were not ultimately material phenomena, but existed at the level of human consciousness. Individual human beings could only be properly understood in terms of their social and cultural efforts at transcendence.

Kant's transcendental idealism was a modest philosophical doctrine about the difference between appearances and things in themselves, which claimed that the objects of human cognition are appearances and not things in themselves.

Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel radicalized this view, transforming Kant's transcendental idealism into absolute idealism, which holds that things in themselves are a contradiction in terms, because a thing must be an object of our consciousness if it is to be an object at all.

OTHER EXPONENTS

Neitzsche, John Bernhardt and Treitschke elevated the state to an extreme height.

They tightened the screw upon the individuals with the words- “The state is power, fall down and worship it”.

Features of Idealism

State is an ethical institution

- The state is associated with many multifarious functions.
- It contributes directly to the development of human personality.
- The development of an individual is not possible without the state.

- State is man's best guide

□ All the welfare of an individual is done by the activities of the state. State activities are always focused on individual's welfare.

• State has its independent will and personality

□ The state is not the sum total of the individual wills. But it has its own independent personality and will.

• State is creator and protector of the rights of the individuals

□ Only State is considered as guardian and protector of the rights of an individual and as the only source of all freedom and rights provided to any individual.

• The basis of the state is will not force

□ It is an embodiment of will having a conductivity of purpose and has aimed for development. State uses force but that is not its primary or most significant quality rather it is the complete embodiment of will.

• States should remove all obstacle to good life

□ state is entitled to remove the obstacle in order to provide a good life. It should maintain all those conditions necessary for an individual's development and welfare which is indispensable for regulating a good life. The state enforces a system of universal and impartial right.

• **An individual should obey the state**

□ **His all actions are in accordance with state. When a state invades the sphere of personality, he has the right of rebellion but even in his rebellion action individual should remember that he is still a citizen loyal to the best for which state stands. Hence the individual is both sovereign and subject.**

• State upholds an organic unity

□ State possesses the same organic unity as is posed by the human body. Just as the organ cannot be more important than the whole body so the individual cannot be more important than a state. They regarded the state as a divine, spiritual, powerful, infallible and absolute institution.

• **Man is a social animal**

□ Idealism begins with Aristotle's view that man is a social animal. This social animal's development is enriched under the proper guidance of the state. The state is indispensable to effective organization and realization of moral ends.

Criticism of Idealistic theory of state

- **Conservatives hold that instead of becoming a source of reform, idealism became a conservative creed.**
- **Theory of idealism is liable to extend a dangerous sanction to the more unscrupulous actions of existing states in the sphere of foreign policy.**
- **Idealistic theory does not make any difference between State and society.**

- **This theory is purely abstract in nature and do not throw light on the existing social conditions.**
- **It propagates negative function of State and does not recognize it as an institution for social cause.**
- **It represents the State as omnipotent and does not confine its authority by any international law or morality.**

- **It scarifies the freedom of the individual.**
- **This theory regards the State as an end and the individual as a means and thus it sacrifices the liberty of the individual.**
- **It resulted in the evolution of Nazism and Fascism whose results and impact are still considered as abuse.**

POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

- **It insists on the organic unity of society**
- **It maintains a close connection between ethics and politics.**
- **Idealism paves way for the welfare state .**
- **It designs a state which aims to ensure common welfare.**
- **This theory promotes individual's development of moral and ethical values.**