

SEMESTER FOUR

UNIT FOUR

TOPIC: SPENCER - ORGANIC THEORY

- Spencer was the pioneer of the biological approach and viewed the state as an organism.
- The comparison of the state to a living organism goes back to the Greek period.
- For Plato ' State was the individual writ large ' and the three classes of society represented the human faculties of reason, courage and appetite.
- Likewise Cicero compared the head of state to the spirit that rules the human body.
- During the Middle Ages Marsiglio of Padua and John of Salisbury drew a comparison between state and individual.
- Althusias's theory of sovereignty was also based on the organic conception of state.
- Hobbes also described state as Leviathan, a superhuman.
- Rousseau also compared state legislatures with human heart and executive with the brain.
- Grotius based his theory of sovereignty on the conception of state as an organism or a moral person.
- The Social Contract theory had given it a setback but the idea of state having it's own personality was brought back by Idealists.

COMPARISON BETWEEN SOCIAL AND BIOLOGICAL ORGANISM

- Spencer first gave the comparison between social and biological organism in 'Social Statics' and explained it further in "Social Organism".
- In "Principles of Sociology" he gave some similarities between social and biological organisms:
 - I. Just as biological organism begins as a germ and evolves into complex structure society begins as a primitive group of hunters or warriors and grows into complex society.
 - II. Both have birth, youth, prime, old age and death.
 - III. In both parts are mutually dependent and overgrowth of one part limits growth of others.
 - IV. While tissue and blood corpuscles are continuously replaced, continuity of social life is maintained by deaths being made up for by births.
 - V. Both have sustaining, distributing and regulatory systems.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOCIAL AND BIOLOGICAL ORGANISM

- Units of biological organisms are closely bound together whereas in social organisms they are widely dispersed.
- Parts in social organisms are less dependent on each other and do not have an external form.
- Consciousness in biological organisms is concentrated in brain but diffused in biological organisms.

- Each unit in state is capable of independent action and existence to a degree but not in biological organisms.
- Evolution of biological organisms leads to greater coherence and subordination to the whole whereas in evolved society the characteristic is 'individuation'. Progress is from homogeneous to heterogeneous, undifferentiated to differentiated.

CONCLUSION

- These differences lead to the conclusion that the welfare of the organism is not the end which is sought. The end is happiness of each unit.
- In contrast to the military society in an industrialized society the individual is the end.
- Spencer thus advocates individualistic theory and respect for personality of individual and his natural rights as indicators of a progressive society.
- His theory of social organism supports evolution whereas his individualism indicates the existence of a contract.
- These contradictory ideas prevail in the philosophy of Spencer