1. Write an essay on the usages of political theory.

**Ans:** Political theory is a subdivision of the study of politics. It is a contested expression in that political theorists have failed to reach a consensus on an all-encompassing definition as any such definition is bound to alienate someone. Theorists have tried to bring some exactness to the contested concepts so that one can provide convincing arguments for the particular social arrangements aimed. However, John Plamenatz defined political theory as the systematic thinking about the purposes of government (Farrelly, 2004). The expression Political Theory is composed of two words, ‘Politics’ and ‘Theory’. Politics literally means the study of politics and it is about conflict of interest and its resolution which occurs at every level of the society. Theory is anything from a plan to a piece of abstract knowledge. In academic discourse, however, a theory is an explanatory proposition, an idea or set of ideas that in some way seeks to impose order or meaning upon phenomena. This paper therefore seeks to discuss what political theory is.

The role of political theory is to analyze the political concepts, understand and criticize them through the use of the four tools: concepts, models, theories and paradigms. Concept is a general idea about something usually expressed in a single word or short phrase that draws out meaning from an otherwise infinitely complex reality, for example: equality, presidency, political party, power, social class, rights, law, etc. (Heywood, 2004). It helps to make sense of the world by serving as a tool for thinking, criticizing, arguing, explaining and analyzing political developments and to classify objects by recognizing that they have similar forms or properties, hence concepts serve as building blocks of human knowledge. Model is a representation of empirical data that aims to advance understanding by highlighting significant relationships and interactions among variables, for example: systems analysis, public choice, game theory, etc. Models are built around a number of concepts to aptly resemble the original object without necessarily becoming its copy. A Theory is an explanation and prediction of relationships among specific variables, for example: pluralism, elitism, functionalism, etc. It is usually used interchangeably with model and may be explained by a series of models. A theory attempts to present a full explanation and prediction of future events while a model attempts to accurately reflect reality. Paradigm is an intellectual framework comprising interrelated values, theories and assumptions, within which search for knowledge is conducted. It consists of a set of principles that structure the process of intellectual inquiry, for example: liberalism, Marxism, feminism, etc.

**OR**

Discuss if political theory is dead.

**Ans:** Political theory can never be dead as it deals with all forms of governance that is prevalent today, was practised in the past and so will be the case in the future. Some changes in the pattern of each type of governance has taken place from time to time, but these are all incorporated in political theory. From monarchy to oligarchy, communism to democracy, autocracy to military dictatorships and so on, political theory has defined each form of governance and their basic guiding principles. Monarchy and communism are gradually losing ground, democracy is striking roots in uncharted territory and people are living in a freer world environment. All this and more are part of political theory that is an ever-evolving doctrine. Due to the economic world order changing at a fast clip, the world has become a global village, so modern-day trade and commerce is influencing political theory in one way or the other.

Political theory cannot die, much as some people might like it to. As Aristotle put it, man is a political animal, in the sense that the urge towards social organization seems to be built in to our very natures. There always have been, and always will be, people thinking hard about what the correct and proper forms of social organization look like. These people are political theorists, and short of hunting them down and killing them — an unfortunately consistent practice across many societies — they will always be writing their books, or pamphlets, or podcasts, or otherwise making themselves known.

Political theory as an academic discipline is a somewhat different question, because there are odd social forces at work in academia as well. In the US, for instance, Political Theory is fairly rare as a discipline or specialty, because US universities have adopted a market model that theory suffers under: wealthy donors dislike political theory because they consider it ‘activist’; Political Science departments often label theory as ‘unscientific’ and push students away from it; academic publications favor more pedantic works involving statistical or structural analysis, and shy away from publishing pure theory. People wishing to study political theory in the US often have to move into the humanities or into Critical Theory departments. Prospects are a bit brighter in Europe, where there is a large academic interest in Social Theory and the University system is less concerned with market forces, but outside of the cultured West, well… Best not to go there.

Modern-day politics is boiling with the potential for political theory discussions. The recidivistic rise of nationalism and fascism in the West is tearing holes in the fabric of Liberal philosophy we all live within, and sooner or later someone is going to have to rebuild or transcend Liberalism into a new philosophy, a new political theory that we can all live by. When and how that might happen is an open question (though I expect, from watching current political trajectories, that things are going to get uglier before we build up the steam we need to break the nationalist stranglehold and assert a new philosophy). But it will happen, and it will be political theory that brings it about. That is the nature of the human beast.

2. Discuss the normative conception of politics.

**Ans:** seg. The normative conception in political theory is known by different names. Some people prefer to call it philosophical theory, while others refer to it as ethical theory. The normative conception is based on the belief that the world and its events can be interpreted in terms of logic, purpose and ends with the help of the theorist’s intuition, reasoning, insights and experiences. In