DAVID EASTON: BEHAVIOURALISM

Introduction

Behaviouralism is a paradigm that became predominant in American social sciences from the 1950s until well into the 1970s. Grounded in a belief in the unity of science and the unity of human behaviour, Behaviouralist scholars developed scientific, quantitative methodologies for the study of political processes and opened up the discipline to a wide range of theories and methods imported from the social and mathematical sciences. Because they believed that political phenomena could be subjected to the methods of science, Behaviouralists turned their back on the normative legacy of the discipline and replaced political philosophy with the philosophy of science, thereby setting new standards for the formulation of concepts, hypotheses, theories, and protocols for empirical testing and explanation building. Although Behavioralism’s paradigmatic reign did not last beyond the 1980s, it has transformed the discipline so profoundly that it remains to this day an essential, albeit implicit, component of its identity.

David Easton was the first to differentiate behaviouralism from behaviourism in the 1950s. He is considered the father of behaviouralism. Behaviouralism is an attempt to apply the methods of natural sciences to human behaviour while behaviourism is a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviours are acquired through conditioning. According to David Easton, behaviouralism sought to be “analytic, not substantive, general rather than particular, and explanatory rather than ethical.”

Post- Behavioural Revolution: David Easton

The year, 1960 saw an anti behaviouralist revolution. This was due to the feeling that the limits of behaviouristic revolution have made political science aimless. Value neutral political science was indifferent to actual politics. It did not offer any suggestion to ameliorate human life or to solve its problems. David Easton has pointed out that political science should study contemporary problems and suggests remedies. Presiding over the 65th session of American political science, he pointed out that behaviouristic methodology is leaning towards too much factuality to make it a physical science. This is reductionism. He pointed out the following important issues unsolved in Behaviouralism:
1. Behaviouralistic method should emphasise present serious problems in place of methodology.
2. Behaviouralism involves empirical basis and supports the *status quo*.
3. As behaviouralism has crossed the limits of actuality, post behaviouralism should try to bring it back then alone it can make a significant contribution to the evolution of the human race.
4. However, social science may make the efforts, the researcher can never be free from personal prejudices and bias. Hence, instead of value-neutral, the researcher should try to develop values creatively. They should protect human values.
5. It is necessary to politicise study of behaviouralism. It should concentrate on world problems. For this, the intellectuals will have to wage struggle.
6. Behaviourism should be able to reconstruct society as knowledge doesn't mean indifference. The intellectual as a scientist has an important responsibility to put his knowledge into action. Thus, he must develop an action which may remove the contemporary conflicts of society towards ideals.

*Tenet of Behaviouralism*

David Easton in his famous work *A Framework for Political Analysis (1965)* has said that the assumptions and objectives of behaviouralism lay the intellectual foundation-stones for political analysis. This claim is not without reason. Behaviouralism as a protest movement revolutionised the thought system of political science in the nineteen forties and fifties. These intellectual foundation-stones are called credo. He has discussed this credo in his above-noted book in detail. The credo can also be described as assumptions of behaviouralism.

1. **Regularities:**
   It means that observable uniformities have been found in the behaviour of individuals. Though individuals behave differently under different circumstances, uniformities can be discovered in their political behaviour. People uniformly react to circumstances. The consequence is certain general conclusions can be framed based on uniform observable behaviour.

2. **Verification:**
   Second assumption or credo is that generalisations can be verified about the behaviour. Political behaviouralists collect data and facts about individuals’ political behaviour and then test the conclusion drawn by them or other Behaviouralists.

3. **Techniques:**
   The behaviouralists collect and interpret data, not in a haphazard way or indiscriminately but methodologically and scientifically i.e. by adopting improved techniques borrowing from other sciences. In other words, the behaviouralists do not take any data or fact as granted. They adopt cautious steps so that any mistake or misconceptions cannot crop up.
4. Quantification:
Data and facts are processed scientifically. But in the entire process, everything is measured and quantified.

5. Values:
In analysing political behaviour and collecting data behaviouralists cautiously proceed. They observe that empirical judgment and value judgment are not mixed. In earlier days, political behaviour was associated with normative judgment—that is, everything was judged in the perspective of values and norms.

But Easton observes that these two approaches are quite distinct and the distinction must be maintained. Otherwise, the political analysis of individuals’ behaviour will not be able to face the proper test.

6. Systematisation:
The researcher of political behaviour must proceed in his analysis quite systematically which means that the purpose of the research is to arrive at the truth or to build up general principles. All these will, in turn, supply materials for building up a structure of the theory. If behaviouralists fail to act systematically they will not succeed. Of course, systematisation is not the sole property of behaviouralists, it is found in every science — physical or social. Researchers must see that their work must be theory-oriented and theory-directed.

From the beginning to the end the behaviouralists shall proceed orderly or systematically. The failure of the researcher to be systematic will put him in problems such as success will be in troubles. Collection of data and facts, research, analysis, building up conclusions and everything else are closely related. This is systematisation.

7. Pure Science:
The behaviouralists claim that their approach, as well as conclusions, is based on the principles of pure science. Even their research conforms to the basic principles of pure science. In every step, they adopt the methods and techniques of pure science. Naturally, they attach great importance to research and the conclusions built up by them. The behaviouralists claim that their dependence on pure science has enhanced the acceptability and prestige of their conclusions.

8. Integration:
It believes in the interrelatedness of all social sciences and aims to make Political Science ‘interdisciplinary’. The ‘political man’ can be understood as a whole, by linking him with his other aspects: social, cultural, economic, religious, psychological and historical. Such an
outlook is likely to make political studies again a ‘master science’ or an architectonic discipline.

**Conclusion**

Behaviouralism is an approach that seeks to provide an objective, quantified approach to explaining and predicting administrative behaviour. Behaviouralism aims at the scientific study of organisational behaviour. It seeks to examine the behaviour, actions, and acts of ‘individuals’ rather than characteristics of institutions. Behaviouralism developed in the United States after World War II as an intellectual concept that stressed precisions, systems, theory and pure science. The idea was that all living things behave regularly and it is possible to see them as adjusting to their environment as a result of the inputs they receive and the outputs they produce.