

The Concept of Power

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The concept of power has long been known to be “a peculiarly problematic concept” for the social sciences. The term power has commonly used by the people to mean some kind of authority exercised in the favor of the user. Power is used to control the rights of the others. Moreover; it envisages some kind of option or choice in the hands of the person possessing the rights of choice. Power means to force a person to do something either for or against the other incumbent.

The Power is defined as ‘the ability to do or act’ and ‘control, influence, ascendancy, while Webster’s Dictionary defines it as the ‘possession of control, authority, or influence over others.’ Power can be possessed and exercised in all kinds of social contexts, from an office or factory to national or international society. Power is perhaps the most basic concept in the study, of world politics, but also the vaguest. Economic factor or material strength is also yet another source of power. Very often the person using power may not be physically or morally strong but the economic strength of the person may compel the other to do something against his wishes for the one who orders him to do something in his interest. Power, thus is generally used to save guard the interest of the strong. It is very often manifest in the political and the social behavior of the people. Although it is difficult to determine with precession different forms of power, yet it is evident that the power flowing from different sources is not identical. It may sometimes be legitimate or otherwise. The source would determine the form and structure of power. The legitimate power may be exercised by the state and the other political institutions. The illegitimate power may spring from the person or persons interested in the pursuit of their own benefit without taking into account the legitimacy of their goal.

For the student of philosophy the legitimate power is important. The power always anticipates one or the other sources. Its legitimacy would be determined on the basis of the source from which its flows. Law for example is one of the valid sources of power. It provides authority or supremacy to a person or group of person’s to dictate or direct others to act accordingly. The legal provisions make one group as the able guide determining the course of action of those