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Bringing the State Back in (Yet Again): Reviews, Revisions, Rejections, and Redirections

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This article addresses West European and North American developments in theorizing the state. It briefly reviews the first major postwar revival of theoretical interest in the state that began in Western Europe during the mid-1960s. This was mainly led by Marxists interested in the general form and functions of the capitalist state; but a key supporting role was played by Marxist-feminists who extended such ideas to the patriarchal capitalist state. (2) A second revival during the late 1970s is then described. This involved many more theoretical currents and substantive concerns and was also more institutionalist in overall approach. Although the self-declared movement to 'bring the state back in' originated in the United States, some of the most innovative work in this theoretical movement is rooted in less overtly state-centred approaches originating in Western Europe. Indeed some of them argue that the state as such should be dethroned from its central position in analyses of political power and domination. Thus, in addition to neo-statism, I also consider Foucauldian theory, feminism, and discourse analysis. By the 1990s this proliferation of approaches had contributed paradoxically to an apparent withering away of interest in the state as such. Nonetheless, as I argue below, research on the state is continuing in new and exciting forms and directions.



I -- The Marxist Legacy

It is oft remarked that Marx and Engels left no adequate theory of the state. Instead, their work comprises a loose and often irreconcilable series of philosophical, theoretical, journalistic, partisan, ad hominem, or purely ad hoc comments. Later, the Second International (Social Democracy) and the Comintern (Marxism-Leninism) developed one-sided accounts of the state based on selective interpretation of certain accessible basic writings of Marx and Engels. The Second International primarily advanced instrumentalist and/or epiphenomenalist views of the state, modified on occasion to take account of the changing balance of political forces, changing stages of capitalism, and the relative stability or crisis-prone nature of capitalism. It also came to support a parliamentary democratic road to socialism based on the electoral conquest of power and on state planning or nationalization of the commanding heights of industry. Such state control of the economy would be facilitated by the growing concentration and centralization of economic and political power in a steadily emerging organized capitalism. The Comintern also tended to advance instrumentalist or epiphenomenalist views and elaborated Lenin's idea about the fusion of the state and monopolies into a single mechanism of economic exploitation and political oppression in the form of state monopoly capitalism. It also developed the Marxist-Leninist claim that the bourgeois democratic republic was essentially capitalist in nature. This ruled out any parliamentary road and implied that an entirely new form of state should forcibly replace bourgeois democracy: a soviet system based on workers' councils with direct rather than indirect democracy. There was an obvious tension between this commitment to direct democracy and the role of the vanguard communist party in leading the revolution to install and consolidate this new state system. The other main contributions to state theory in the interwar period were those of first generation Critical Theorists concerned with the trends towards a strong, bureaucratic state -- whether authoritarian or totalitarian in form. (3) This corresponded to the development of organized or state capitalism, relied increasingly on the mass media for its ideological power, and had integrated the trade union movement as a political support or else smashed it as part of the consolidation of totalitarian rule. Gramsci was also writing during this period, of course; but his prison notebooks only became widely known and influential in the 1950s and 1960s.

A serious revival of Marxist interest in the state, going well beyond the main prewar approaches and arguments, occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s. It was stimulated by the apparent success of the Keynesian welfare national state in managing postwar capitalism in the economic space by Atlantic Fordism and by the desire to show that this state form was still essentially capitalist in character. Thus it was initially concerned with deriving the necessary form and functions of the capitalist state from the basic categories of Marx's critique of political economy and proving that contemporary states could not actually suspend the crisis-tendencies and contradictions of capitalism. In its concern with the fundamental features of the capitalist state, this revival of interest had already largely imploded in the late 1970s. It did so under the weight of a multitude of competing theoretical starting points and an overemphasis on highly abstract theorizing that blithely disregarded the historical variability of political regimes and the different forms taken by capitalism. Indeed, with a few, notable exceptions, individual contributions to the Marxist state debate have been lost in the mists of time. But several of the better analysts did formulate two key insights that are relevant to a far wider theoretical circle and/or that concern more specific historical and comparative issues. Although these insights were not always expressed in the same words, there was a clear convergence in their core underlying arguments.

Firstly, in turning from functional analysis to form analysis, Marxist state theorists discovered that form threatens function. Much of their initial work was concerned to derive the necessary form of the state from the various functions it was supposedly required to perform on behalf of capital. Seen in such terms, form must follow from function. This argument is quite consistent with claims about the state's relative autonomy on condition that the latter is seen both as necessary and as limited to the state's ability to meet the interests of capital. But later work tended to explore how the typical form of the capitalist state actually problematized its overall functionality for capital accumulation and political class domination. Thus viewed, dysfunction may follow from form. For the institutional separation of the state from the market economy, a separation which was regarded as a necessary and defining feature of capitalist societies,



results in the dominance of different (and potentially contradictory) institutional logics and modes of calculation in the state and the economy (e.g., Hirsch 1976; Offe 1984; Poulantzas 1978; Reuten and Williams 1989). Thus there is no guarantee that political outcomes will serve the needs of capital -- even if (and, indeed, precisely because) the state is operationally autonomous. This conclusion fuelled work on the structural contradictions, strategic dilemmas, and path-dependent (i.e., historically conditioned) development of specific state forms. It also prompted a decline in highly abstract and often essentialist theorization in favour of more detailed accounts of the complex interplay of social struggles and institutions.

Secondly, gradually abandoning views of the state apparatus as a simple thing or a unitary class subject, Marxist theorists began to analyse state power as a complex social relation. Some early works saw the state as little more than a neutral instrument of class domination; some adopted a more structuralist view according to which the state was bound to serve capitalist interests regardless of who controlled it; and yet other works viewed the state as a kind of rational calculating subject, an ideal collective capitalist, able both to discern and pursue the real interests of capital in general against the particular or perceived interests of individual capitals. None of these views proved satisfactory. (4) What gradually (and partially) emerged to replace them were studies of different states' structural selectivity and the factors that shaped their strategic capacities. By structural selectivity they referred to the ways in which the state as an ensemble of institutions had a specific, differential impact on the ability of various political forces to pursue particular interests and strategies in and through access to and control over given state capacities -- themselves always dependent for their effects on links to forces and powers beyond the state (on this concept, see especially, Offe 1972; Poulantzas 1978). More attention was also paid to the variability of these capacities, their organization, and exercise. This prompted greater emphasis on the relational nature of state power and on states' capacities to project their power into social realms well beyond their own institutional boundaries. And, as with the first set of insights, it also led to more complex studies of struggles, institutions, and political capacities.

Gramsci is almost alone among Marxist state theorists whose work attracted sustained attention in this first postwar revival still to enjoy widespread critical acclaim in the 1990s. It is surely no accident that Gramsci studied the concrete modalities of state power rather than theorizing the capitalist state in general. He investigated the 'state in its inclusive sense' (i.e., 'political society + civil society') and showed how state power in bourgeois societies rested on 'hegemony armoured by coercion' (Gramsci 1971). Moreover, rather than just treating specific institutions and apparatuses as technical instruments of government, Gramsci was concerned with their social bases and stressed how their functions and effects are shaped by their links to the economic system and civil society. Together with its incomplete and tentative character, this makes his approach compatible with several other theoretical currents. Among these are discourse theory, feminism, Foucauldian analyses, and post-modernism (e.g., Golding 1992; Lester 2000; Sassoon 1985; Smart 1986; and Holub 1992). The more open-ended and polyvalent nature of Gramsci's work has helped to maintain the vitality of his work.

A more recent source of continued interest in Marxist state theory is much less direct but still very significant, namely, the regulation approach to political economy. This diverse school of thought first emerged in the late 1970s and became prominent in the 1980s. In this sense it can properly be considered as participating in the second wave of interest in state theory. The essential (re-) discovery of regulationism was that capitalist economies are socially embedded and social regularized. From here it was but a short step (more difficult for some than others) to the realization that the state system had a key role to play in the reproduction-regulation of capital accumulation. This opened the way for more complex and concrete analyses of the state's contribution to the shaping, sustaining, and undermining of specific accumulation regimes and modes of growth. This is one of the main themes of second and third generation regulation theory (e.g., Häusler and Hirsch 1987; Jenson 1990; Jessop 1992, 1997b; Noë 1990; Théret 1992).

II -- The Second Wave

Possibly the most important single theoretical current to have shaped the second revival of interest in the state as such was the movement (especially popular in the USA) to 'bring the



state back in' as a critical explanatory variable in social analysis. But this movement did not go unchallenged. For, besides the continuing influence of Gramsci and the variable impact of other neo-Marxist currents, serious competition came from several other approaches. Among these are, first, the work of Foucault and his followers on the disciplinary organization of society, the micro-physics of power, and changing forms of governmentality -- an approach that ran counter to neo-statism in tending to remove the state from theoretical view once again; second, the development of a broad-based feminist critique of malestream state theory -- an approach which raised, among other questions, the issue of whether feminists (and others) really need a theory of the state; and, third, growing interest in the discourses and practices that constitute the state -- an approach that oscillates rather unsteadily between deconstructing and reconstructing the state as a theoretical object. This list is not exhaustive but will suffice to illustrate the range of positions in the second revival.

1) State-Centred Approaches

Demands to 'bring the state back' in came from social scientists who claimed that the dominant postwar approaches to the state were too 'society-centred'. These approaches allegedly tried to explain the form, functions, and impact of the state in terms of factors rooted in the organization, needs, or interests of society. Thus Marxism was accused of economic reductionism for its emphasis on base-superstructure relations and the class struggle; pluralism was charged with limiting its account of competition for state power to interest groups and movements rooted in civil society and thus ignoring the distinctive role and interests of state managers; and structural-functionalism was criticized for assuming that the development and subsequent operations of the state or political system were determined by the functional requirements of society as a whole. According to 'state-centred' theorists such approaches put the cart before the horse. They themselves argued that state activities and impact are easily explained in terms of its own distinctive properties as an administrative or repressive organ and/or the equally distinctive properties of the broader political system encompassing the state. Societal factors, when not actually deemed wholly irrelevant, were certainly secondary; and their impact on state affairs was always filtered through the political system and the state itself.

In its more programmatic guise the statist approach often advocated a return to classic theorists such as Machiavelli, Clausewitz, de Tocqueville, Weber, or Hintze. (5) In practice, however, those working in the statist paradigm have shown little interest in (let alone any real familiarity with) such thinkers, with the partial exception of Weber. (6) Indeed it often appears that these thinkers are cited chiefly to legitimate neo-statism by linking it to a long tradition of state-centred thought. In any event, the real focus of state-centred work is detailed case studies of state building, policy-making, and implementation.

In this latter context six themes have been emphasized: (1) the geo-political position of different modern states within the international system of nation-states and its implications for the logic of state action; (2) the dynamic of military organization and the impact of warfare in the overall development of the state; (3) the distinctive administrative powers of the modern state -- especially those rooted in its capacities to produce and enforce collectively binding decisions within a centrally organized, territorially bounded society -- and its strategic reach in relation to all other social sub-systems (including the economy), organizations (including capitalist enterprises), and forces (including classes) within its domain; (4) the state's role as a distinctive factor in shaping institutions, group formation, interest articulation, political capacities, ideas, and demands beyond the state -- the aspect sometimes identified as 'Tocquevillean'; (5) the distinctive pathologies of government and the political system -- such as bureaucratism, political corruption, government overload, or state failure; and (6) the distinctive interests and capacities of 'state managers' (career officials, elected politicians, etc.) as opposed to other social forces. Different 'state-centred' theorists have emphasized different factors or combinations thereof. But the main conclusions persist: there are distinctive political pressures and processes that shape the state's form and functions; that give it a real and important autonomy when faced with pressures and forces emerging from the wider society; and that thereby give it a unique and irreplaceable centrality both in national life and the international order. In short, the state is a force in its own right and does not just



serve the economy or civil society (e.g., Krasner 1978; Nordlinger 1981; Skocpol 1979; and Stepan 1985).

Their approach leads 'state-centred' theorists to advance a very different approach to state autonomy. For Marxist theorists, the latter was primarily understood in terms of its capacity to promote the long-term, collective interests of capital even when faced with opposition -- including that from particular capitalist interests. Neo-statists reject such a class- or capital-theoretical account and suggest the state can exercise autonomy in its own right and in pursuit of its own, quite distinctive, interests. Accordingly, they emphasize: (a) state managers' ability to exercise power independently of (and even in the face of resistance from) non-state forces -- especially where a pluralistic universe of social forces provides them with broad room for manoeuvre; and (b) the grounding of this ability in state capacities or 'infrastructural' power, i.e., the state's ability to penetrate, control, supervise, police, and discipline modern societies through its own specialized capacities (e.g., Dandeker 1990; Giddens 1985; Mann 1983; Nordlinger 1981; Skocpol 1985). Moreover, neo-statists argue that state autonomy is not a fixed structural feature of each and every governmental system. It differs across states, by policy area, and over time. This is partly due to external limits on the scope for autonomous state action and partly to variations in the capacity and readiness of state managers to pursue a strategy independent of non-state actors.

A specific variant of state-centred theorizing is found in war-centred state theory. A growing band of theorists re-instated the military dimension of state theory and complained about its neglect in other schools -- something they attributed to Marxists' exaggerated interest in class struggle and to sociologists' false belief in the inherently pacific logic of industrialism. Yet, for war-centred theorists, war is not just of archival interest: it is highly relevant to modern states. They note that war has decisively shaped the present century, states continually prepare for war and have much enhanced military and surveillance capacities, and citizens' (or total) wars have repercussions throughout state and society (e.g., Shaw 1991).

For such theorists, the state is seen as an apparatus for war-making and repression. It must defend its territorial integrity against other forces and maintain social cohesion inside its own territory by resorting to coercion as and when this proves necessary. Thus the state is seen in the first instance as the bearer of military power within a world of other nation states, rather than as a political community within which citizenship rights may be realised (cf. Giddens 1985). Indeed, for some war-centred theorists, not only is the fully-formed state a military-repressive apparatus but the very process of state formation is itself closely tied to war. For, as Tilly pithily notes, wars make states and states make wars. This goes beyond the trite remark that states are often forged in the heat of war (either in victory or defeat); it also involves the idea that war-making can induce political centralisation, encourage the development of a modern taxation system, and produce other such features of a modern state. Moreover, once the state emerges (through war or preparation for war), many key aspects of the state's form and functions are determined primarily by concerns with external defence and internal pacification (e.g., Mann 1985, 1987; Tilly 1973, 1992; Dandeker 1990; Porter 1996; Shaw 1991).

Five main lines of criticism have been advanced against neo-statism. (7) Firstly, it is said that the approach is hardly novel and that all its core themes can be found in the so-called 'society-centred' approaches (e.g., Domhoff 1987; Almond 1988). Secondly, it has been said that neo-statism is one-sided because it focuses on state and party politics at the expense of political forces outside and beyond the state. In particular, it seems to substitute 'politicians for social formations (such as class or gender or race), elite for mass politics, political conflict for social struggle' (Gordon 1990: 181). Thirdly, some critics claim to have identified empirical inadequacies in several key statist studies as well as incomplete and misleading accounts of other studies cited to lend some credence to the statist approach (e.g., Cammack 1989, 1990; Mitchell 1991). Fourthly, charges of political bad faith have been laid. Thus Binder argued that neo-statism implies that politically autonomous state managers can act as effective agents of economic modernization and social reform and should be encouraged to do so; in support of this charge, he notes that no neo-statist case studies exist revealing the harmful effects of their authoritarian or autocratic rule (Binder 1988).



Finally, and most seriously, neo-statism is held to rest upon a fundamental theoretical fallacy. It assumes there are clear and unambiguous boundaries between state apparatus and society, state managers and social forces, and state power and societal power. It implies that the state (or the political system) and society are mutually exclusive and self-determining, each can be studied in isolation, and the resulting analyses added together to provide a complete account. This reifies and renders absolute what are really emergent, partial, unstable, and variable distinctions. It rules out hybrid logics such as corporatism or policy networks; divisions among state managers due to ties between state organs and other social spheres; and many other forms of overlap between state and society (e.g., Atkinson and Coleman 1992; Poulantzas 1974; Jessop 1990). If this assumption is rejected, however, the distinction between state-centred and so-called society-centred approaches dissolves. And this in turn invalidates, not merely the extreme claim that the state apparatus should be treated as the independent variable in explaining political and social events, but also lesser neo-statist claims such as the heuristic value of bending the stick in the other direction or, alternatively, of combining state-centred and society-centred accounts to produce the complete picture.

This does not rule out theoretical analyses of the state, of course; it does mean that state theory cannot take the state for granted. For the very existence of the state is problematic. Thus Mitchell concludes his own critique of neo-statism with a plea to study 'the detailed processes of spatial organization, temporal arrangement, functional specification, and supervision and surveillance, which create the *appearance of a world fundamentally divided into state and society*' (1991: 95, italics mine). This division is conceptually prior to any possible influence of state on society, or society on the state; and it is one that is always produced in and through practices on both sides of the state-society divide. This crucial point is taken up in my conclusions but also provides an appropriate bridge to Foucault's work.

2) Foucauldian Approaches

If state-centred theorists hoped to bring the state back in from the cold, putting it out for the garbage collector could well describe Foucault's ultimate goal. For he linked his historical investigations into power, knowledge, and discipline to a

sustained theoretical rejection of liberal and Marxist views of sovereignty, law, and the state. More generally his work has major implications for all state theorists because it casts grave doubt on their preoccupation with the state -- whether as an independent, intervening, or dependent variable. Indeed Foucault compared his rejection of attempts to build a state theory with the wholly sensible refusal to eat an indigestible meal (Gordon 1991: 4).

This attempt at theoretical self-preservation seems to have been grounded in three key arguments. Firstly, Foucault alleged that state theory is essentialist: for it tries to explain the nature of the state and state power in terms of their own inherent, pre-given properties. It should be trying instead to explain the development and functioning of the state as the contingent out-come of specific practices which are not necessarily (if at all) located within, nor openly oriented to, the state itself. Secondly, state theory is alleged to retain medieval notions of a centralized, monarchical sovereignty and/or a unified, juridico-political power. In place of such notions Foucault stressed the tremendous dispersion and multiplicity of the institutions and practices involved in the exercise of state power and insisted that many of these were extra-judicial in nature. And, thirdly, state theorists were allegedly preoccupied with the forms of sovereign political and legal power at the summits of the state apparatus, the discourses which legitimated power at the centre, and the extent of the sovereign state's reach into society. In contrast Foucault advocated an ascending, bottom-up approach which proceeds from the diffuse forms of power relations in the many and varied local and regional sites where the identity and conduct of social agents was actually determined. He was concerned with what he described as the micro-physics of power, the actual practices of subjugation, rather than the macro-political strategies that guide attempts at domination. For state power does not stem from control over some substantive, material resource peculiar to the state. It is actually the provisional, emergent result of the complex strategic interplay of diverse social forces within and beyond the state. It is dispersed and involves the active mobilization of individuals and not just their passive targeting, and can be colonized and articulated into quite different discourses, strategies, and institutions. In short, power is not



concentrated in the state: it is ubiquitous, immanent in every social relation (see notably Foucault 1975, 1980).

This did not mean that Foucault rejected all concern with the macro-physics of state power. Far from it. Indeed, among those most closely identified with the linguistic turn and post-structuralism, Foucault is unusual for his interest in the state (cf. Pringle and Watson 1992: 56). This was no longer identified with the sovereign state described in juridical-political discourse, however; for Foucault's approach was far more idiosyncratic and powerful. He regarded the state as the site of statecraft and governmental rationality. Thus he studied how different political regimes emerged through shifts in 'governmentality'. What interested Foucault was the art of government, a skilled discursive practice in which state capacities were used reflexively to monitor the population and, with

all due prudence, to make it conform to specific state projects. At the origins of the Foucauldian state was *raison d'état*, an autonomous political rationality, set apart from religion and morality (Gordon 1991: 9). This in turn could be linked to different modes of political calculation or state projects, such as those coupled to the 'police state' (*Polizeistaat*), social government, or the welfare state (Gordon 1991: 26-7). It was in and through these governmental rationalities or state projects that more local or regional sites of power were colonized, articulated into ever more general mechanisms and forms of global domination, and then maintained by the entire state system. Foucault also insisted on the need to explore the connections between these forms of micro-power and mechanisms for producing knowledge -- whether for surveillance, the formation and accumulation of knowledge about individuals, or their constitution as specific types of subject (Foucault 1991).

Foucault's work has inspired many other studies of the state and state power. These are generally focused on specific policies or policy apparatuses and/or specific political discourses and strategies (e.g. Barry et al., 1996; Burchell et al., 1991; Cooper 1998; Hindess and Mitchell 1998; Miller and Rose 1990; Neocleous 1996; Rose 1999; Rose and Miller 1992). A few studies have tried to develop a general account of the state purportedly (8) based on Foucauldian perspectives. For example, Giddens treats surveillance as one of four key institutional clusterings in modern societies that intersect in the nation-state: the others are industrialism, capitalism, and militarism. As surveillance techniques develop, control can be extended further over time and space, thereby enhancing the state's capacities for internal pacification and external military operations. In this regard the modern state's control can be distinguished from the local community control and armed intervention found in the traditional state. For its main means of control and punishment are policing, codified law, and imprisonment; these are linked in turn to the dominance of exchange relations in production, civilian control of the military, and extended citizenship. An interesting consequence of these changes is that the modern state actually resorts less often to violence to control the populace: surveillance and disciplinary normalization do much of the work of regularizing activities in time and space (Giddens 1985: 183-92). These ideas are taken further in a recent study by Dandeker, who offers a typology of states based on surveillance mechanisms and the interests they serve (1990: *passim*).

Assessing Foucault's oeuvre is almost as complicated as deciphering Gramsci's notebooks. He never codified his work and his views tended to change with each monograph. For present purposes, moreover, careful regard must also be paid to the shift from his attacks on orthodox views of the state and power relations to his concern with the role of political discourses and statecraft in the emergence and transformation of the modern state. Taking his ideas on the ubiquity of power relations, the coupling of power-knowledge, and governmentality together, however, Foucault offers an important theoretical and empirical corrective to the more one-sided and/or essentialist analyses of Marxist state theory and to the taken-for-grantedness of the state which infuses neo-statism. But his work remains vulnerable to the charge that it tends to reduce power to a universal technique (whether panoptic surveillance or disciplinary normalisation) and to ignore how class and patriarchal relations shape both the state and the more general exercise of power. It also neglects the continued importance of law, constitutionalized violence, and bureaucracy in the workings of the modern state (cf. Poulantzas 1978). Moreover, whatever the merits of drawing attention to the ubiquity of power, his work provided little account of the bases of resistance (bar an alleged plebeian



spirit of revolt). And, whilst Foucault himself did later re-examine the state and statecraft, Foucauldian studies still tend to ignore the complex strategic and structural character of the state. They show little interest in the organizational conditions that make it even half-way possible for a state to engage in effective action. At the same time they show little interest in the various limitations on the capacities of even the most well-endowed state. Both issues require a concern with institutional and organizational factors that lie well beyond the typical concepts and assumptions of Foucauldianism.

3) Feminist State Theory

Just as it is a commonplace that Marx and Engels left no coherent account of the state, so too it is often argued that no such theory has been developed by feminism (e.g., MacKinnon 1982; Connell 1990). For, while feminists have certainly elaborated distinctive theories of gender and the gendering of social relations, even where they have been interested in the state, their ideas on its general nature and form have often been imported from outside. This observation is not intended to belittle the many powerful feminist critiques of political (as opposed to state) theory nor to denigrate the many important feminist accounts of particular, gender-relevant aspects of the operation and impact of states. Instead my remark is meant to highlight the difficulties involved in developing distinctively feminist accounts of the general form and functions of the state.

Not all feminists would agree that feminism needs such a theory -- either intellectually or politically. Thus Allen has argued that feminists should concentrate on developing concepts appropriate to a feminist theoretical and political agenda and should reject existing state theories 'with [their] definitions, parameters and analytic tasks forged for political positions other than feminism' (Allen 1990: 21). In this context she calls on feminists to focus on categories such as policing, law, medical culture, bureaucratic culture, organized crime, fraternalism, paternalism, misogyny, subjectivity, the body, sexuality, men, masculinity, violence, power, pleasure, and so forth, which bear directly on feminist political concerns (Allen 1990: 28). In other cases it is not so much their purported irrelevance that prompts rejection of existing theories as it is their malign 'malestream' or, worse yet, their phallographic character and their resulting debilitating impact on feminist thought and mobilization (e.g., MacKinnon 1982, 1983). But other feminists have called on their sisters to theorize the complexities of state power precisely because of their pervasive impact on gender relations. Thus Brown has argued that feminists need to analyze the state because it is so central to many women's issues and so many women are state dependants (Brown 1992: 7; cf. Franzway et al., 1989: 12-13). But, rather than a single, all-purpose theory which fails to register the real strategic complexity of the state, its discourses, and technologies of power, Brown suggests developing insights from different state theories relevant to the different faces that the state presents to women. (9)

Where feminists first began to tackle the state as such was in the attempted marriage between feminism and marxism (cf. Mahon 1991; Pringle and Watson 1992). This was an important current in the 1970s state theory revival and typically involved attempts to graft theories of reproduction and patriarchy onto Marxist analyses of production in order to show how patriarchy served capitalism and how the latter depended for its survival on specific social forms reproducing labour-power and gender relations as well as specific social relations of production (e.g., McIntosh 1978; Eisenstein 1981). For some time, indeed, the dominant approach in feminist state theorizing was Marxist-feminism. It was perhaps for this reason that efforts to develop feminist state theory often adopted methods of theory construction similar to those found in Marxist theorizing more generally. Thus we can distinguish three main ways of linking feminist concerns and the state: the methods of subsumption, derivation, and articulation.

Some radical feminist theories simply subsumed each and every state under the overarching category of patriarchal domination: whatever their apparent differences, all states are expressions of patriarchy or phallogracy and so must be opposed. Such arguments either assimilate the state to patriarchy in general or identify specific gendering mechanisms of the state itself. For some, patriarchy is diffused throughout society, with the state being yet another institution that treats men and women unequally, adopts the male viewpoint, serves and consolidates the interests of men as a sex. Thus the state is just one more site of male



domination over women; at best (or worst) it serves as the 'patriarch general' (Mies 1986: 26). In its more complex versions such an approach views the state as a specific form of patriarchal or phallocratic domination with its own determinate (and distinctive) effects on gender relations. Thus it engenders power relations in specific ways, through its own patriarchal strategic selectivity, capacities, and needs. (10) However, insofar as it is patriarchy that defines the core of the state and all else is treated as unimportant, these views are still subsumptionist (for critiques of early feminist state theories, see: Allen 1990: 26-7; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989; Connell 1990: 516-17; Pringle and Watson 1992: 62-3).

Other feminists tried to derive the necessary form and/or functions of the patriarchal state from the imperatives of reproduction (rather than production), from the changing forms of patriarchal domination, or the nature of the 'domestic' mode of production, etc.. Such work suffers from similar theoretical problems as the Marxist derivation debate, namely, the assumption that form necessarily follows function and the consequent denial of any real autonomy or contingency to the state. In some cases this simply provides a feminist variation on economism, in others we find a more elaborate version of subsumptionism which defines all too well the mechanisms guaranteeing the state's patriarchal character (cf. criticisms in Jenson 1986; Walby 1990).

Others again try to analyze the contingent articulation of patriarchal and capitalist forms of domination as crystallized in the state. The best work in this field confirms the importance of the articulation method: for it shows that patriarchal and gender relations make a difference to the state at the same time as refusing to prejudge the form and effects of this difference. In other words, 'acknowledging that gender inequality exists does not automatically imply that every capitalist state is involved in the reproduction of that inequality in the same ways or to the same extent' (Jenson 1986: 10; cf. Brenner and Laslett 1991; Hernes 1987). The same sort of approach also reveals the importance of differences among women as well as between gender groups and this is an important corrective to extreme forms of gender essentialism. Indeed there is now an extensive literature on the complex and variable forms of articulation of class, gender, and ethnicity in particular state structures and policy areas (e.g., Boris 1995; Sainsbury 1994; Williams 1995). This 'intersectional' approach has been taken further still by third wave feminists and queer theorists, who have emphasized the instability and socially constructed arbitrariness of dominant views of sexual and gender identities and have shown the wide variability of masculine as well as feminine identities and interests (on third wave feminism, see Butler 1990; Fraser 1997; Ferree et al., 1999; Randall and Waylen 1998; Yuval-Davis 1996; and, for a useful introduction to queer theory, Dugan 1994). Thus there is growing interest in the constitution of competing, inconsistent, and even openly contradictory identities for both males and females, their grounding in discourses about masculinity and/or femininity, their explicit or implicit embedding in different institutions and material practices, (11) and their physico-cultural materialization in human bodies. This has created the theoretical space for a recent revival of explicit interest in gender and the state, which has made major contributions across a broad range of issues – including how specific constructions of masculinity and femininity, their associated gender identities, interests, roles, and bodily forms come to be privileged in the state's own discourses, institutions, and material practices. Such studies rule out any analysis of the state as a simple expression of patriarchal domination and also cast doubt on the very utility of "patriarchy" as an analytical category.

The best feminist scholarship on state theory has profound implications. For it casts doubt on key assumptions of much 'malestream' work. Firstly, it is a commonplace that the modern state claims a legitimate monopoly over the means of coercion. Feminists often attack this conventional approach because men can get away with violence (not to say murder) against women within the confines of the family and, through the reality, threat, or fear of rape, also oppress women in public spaces. This suggests that the orthodoxy relates to the separation of coercion from the organization of production (exploitation takes the form of exchange, dictatorship takes the form of democracy) (12) and the centralization of publicly organized power rather than to the exercise of parental or patriarchal coercion in the family over women and children. Even so feminists might well add that this rational-legal legitimation of state coercion is just the public form assumed by masculine violence and is actually used to support its private expression within the family and civil society.



Such arguments have been taken further in recent work on different forms of masculinity and the state (Connell 1995, 1996). This last point bears on a second crucial contribution of feminist theorizing: its critique of the juridical distinction between 'public' and 'private'. For, not only does this distinction serve to obfuscate class relations (as Marxists have argued), it also, and perhaps even more fundamentally, operates to hide a key mechanism of male domination. Thus, whilst Marxists suggest that the rise of the liberal bourgeois state and its attendant split between public citizen and private individual is grounded in the development of capitalism, feminists would interpret it as the product of the patriarchal ordering of the bourgeois state (Eisenstein 1981). Whilst Marxists tend to equate the public sphere with the state and the private sphere with private property, exchange, and individual rights, feminists tend to equate the former both with the state and civil society, the latter with the domestic sphere and women's alleged place in the 'natural' order of reproduction. Men and women are differentially located in the public and private spheres: indeed, historically, women have been excluded from the public sphere and subordinated to men in the private. Yet men's independence both as citizens and as workers is premised on women's role in caring for them at home (Pateman 1989: 120, 123, 203). Moreover, even where women have won full citizenship rights, their continuing oppression and subjugation in the private sphere hinders their exercise and enjoyment of these rights (Siim 1988: 163). (13) Not only is the distinction between 'public' and 'private' political, then, but the very organization of the 'private' sphere itself has major implications for the strategic selectivity of the state.

A third area of feminist criticism focuses on the links between warfare, masculinity, and the state. In general terms, as Connell notes, 'the state arms men and disarms women' (Connell 1987: 126; cf. Elshtain 1987). At its most extreme, this criticism involves concepts such as the 'sado-state' (Daly 1984), the suggestion that the military apparatus is a simple expression of male aggression and destructiveness, or the view that militarism and imperialism are expressions of a cult of violent masculinity (Fernbach 1981). Thus Lloyd notes that 'the masculinity of citizenship and the masculinity of war have been conceptually connected in Western thought' (1986: 64). More nuanced historical accounts have shown how state legitimacy is structured in terms of masculinity: whilst the ancien regime being organized around notions of personal and family honour, patronage, and military prowess, for example, the modern state rests on ideas of rationality, calculation, orderliness, hierarchy, and informal masculine codes and networks (Landes 1988; Connell 1990: 521; on modern bureaucracies, whether public or private, Ferguson 1984; and, more generally on different forms of masculinity, Connell 1995, 1996).

Three broad positions could be adopted by non-feminists to feminist work: a) dismiss it as wholly irrelevant; b) accept it as a more or less important supplement to the core contributions of some other account; or c) welcome it as a fundamental challenge to the received wisdom. The first position is untenable. For, as the second view suggests, feminist research shows that other theories have missed or marginalized key aspects of the state's form and functions and has also provided new examples of how form problematizes function and creates specific contradictions, dilemmas, and conflicts. This holds not only for conventional Marxist and neo-statist approaches, for example, but also for the study of international relations (e.g., Enloe 1983, 2000; Peterson, 1992; Sylvester 1994) and the recent interest in Foucauldian analyses (for critical feminist appropriations of the latter, see, for example, McNay 1992; Cooper 1995; Fraser 1988; Martin 1982; Ramazanoglu 1993; Sawacki 1991). Moreover, in line with the third view, some feminist research has revealed basic flaws in much mainstream theorizing. Thus an adequate account of the strategic complexity of the state must include the key feminist insights into the gendered nature of the state's structural selectivity and capacities for action as well as its key role in reproducing specific patterns of gender relations (for attempts to develop such a strategic-relational approach, see Jessop 1997a, 2001).

4) Discourse-Analysis and Stateless State Theory

To read some recent discourse-analytic work might easily lead one to believe that the best kept of all official secrets is the fact that the state does not exist. (14) Instead it is an illusion: a product of the political imaginary. Its emergence depends on the prevalence of state discourses. The state appears on the political scene because political forces orient their actions towards the 'state', acting as if it existed. But, since there is no common discourse of



the state (at most there is a dominant or hegemonic discourse) and different political forces orient their action at different times to different ideas of the state, it is evident that the state is at best a polyvalent, polycontextual phenomenon which changes shape and appearance with the political forces acting towards it and the circumstances in which they do so. This apparently heretical idea has been advanced from various theoretical or analytical viewpoints and the following paragraphs offer four examples.

Firstly, following a review of Marxist and other attempts to define the state as a distinct material entity, agent, function, or political relation, Abrams noted that such attempts only create difficulties. He recommended abandoning the state as a material object of study. For the institutional ensemble which comprises government can be studied without resorting to the concept of the state; and the 'idea of the state' can be studied in turn as the distinctive collective (mis-) representation of capitalist societies which serves to mask the true nature of political practice (Abrams 1977/1988). Political systems theorists have often condemned the conceptual morass and vapid debates that accompany state theorizing (e.g., Easton 1981). But Abrams's position is both more positive and more negative because he sees a constitutive role for the 'state idea' in both shaping and disguising political domination. In turn this calls for a historical analysis of the 'cultural revolution' (or ideological shifts) involved when state systems are transformed (cf. Corrigan and Sayer 1985).

Secondly, Melossi makes a similar claim. He urges a 'stateless theory of the state', i.e., recognition that the state is just a juridical concept, an idea which enables people to do the state, to furnish themselves and others with reasons and grounds for their own actions. As such it can be used reflexively by many different types of official to provide a vocabulary of motives for their (in)actions and to account for the unity of the state in a divided and unequal civil society (Melossi 1990: 2, 6, 150). In turn this implies that state autonomy should not be seen as a reified property of a reified state; instead it varies with the degree of autonomy with which governmental elites see themselves endowed in specific places at particular times (Melossi 1990: 128; cf. Watson 1990: 7).

Third, in addition to general ideological demystification and an emphasis on the self-reflexive use of the state idea, we can find an increasing interest in specific narrative, rhetorical, or argumentative features of state power. This is reflected in various case studies of policy-making which suggest that state policies do not so much objectively represent the interests located in or beyond the state or objectively reflect 'real' problems in the internal or external environments of the political system as they are discursively-mediated, if not wholly discursively-constituted, products of struggles to define and narrate 'problems' which can be dealt with in and through state action. In this sense the effectivity of policy-making is closely tied to its rhetorical and argumentative framing -- especially as effectivity, like beauty, often exists only in the eyes (or ears) of the beholder (see, for example, Fischer and Forester 1993; Roe 1994). In addition to detailed domestic policy studies along these lines, there have been some important contributions from within 'critical geo-politics' regarding key international dimensions of state -- especially discourses of sovereignty, the changing nature of 'security' and threats thereto, and the remaking of the territorial boundaries of states (see, for example, Bartelson 1995; Campbell 1992; Luke 1994; O Tuathail 1996; O Tuathail and Luke 1994; Walker 1993).

Fourthly, autopoietic theorists have advanced the idea that the 'state' is simply a self-description or internal model of the political system. (15) The key feature of autopoietic systems is their radical operational autonomy. This derives from their power to determine their own operational codes and programmes and to reproduce (or transform) themselves despite attempts at control from outside and/or other perturbing influences in their environment. One such system is the modern economy as a self-organizing system of payments (cf. marxists on the self-valorization of capital). Two others are the legal system (a self-contained and self-modifying system of legally binding legal decisions) and the political system (a circuit of power passing among governors and governed and producing decisions that are binding on all participants). Since power continually circulates through the political system, it is wrong to reify the state by treating it as a distinct entity with its own power and resources. Certainly the centrifugal dynamic of functionally differentiated modern societies means that the state is no longer able to play the superordinate role attributed to it in early modern political theory



(Willke 1987). It is best understood as the means through which participants simplify problems of political action by polarizing them around the issue of government and opposition. And the polity in turn should be seen as one system among others in a polycentric, fundamentally anarchic society. Neither it nor the 'state' is superordinate or sovereign. Instead they are the means through which society is supplied with legitimate and binding decisions about collective goods. These include internal and external security (with the infrastructural power to secure this collective good being based on organized violence); economic and social security (with a key role for government-controlled fiscal and financial resources); and, most recently, technological and

ecological security (where infrastructural capacities are based on collectively organized knowledge). Each of these forms of security corresponds to distinctive political projects and forms of intervention. Thus the contemporary polity is particularly concerned with how best to 'guide' other functional systems without attempting direct (and fruitless) intervention into their operations. This is said to be best achieved by defining the parameters within which they operate, generating knowledge about the unintended external consequences of their activities, and seeking to build consensus on social projects (see: Luhmann 1990; Teubner 1993; and, most importantly in this context, Willke 1992, 1996; on changing state capacities and knowledge, see also Wagner 1989 and Wittrock 1989).

Thus, in all four cases, we find rejection of the reification of the state combined with an attempt to theorize the critical role of the idea of the state and its associated narrative and rhetorical practices in the operation of the political system and/or wider society. This role is variously defined as mystification, self-motivation, pure narrativity, or self-description but, regardless of standpoint, discourses about the state have a key constitutive role in shaping the state as a complex ensemble of political relations linked to society as a whole. This approach contrasts markedly with the reification of the state-society distinction in state-centred theorizing. It also offers a different slant on the Foucauldian rejection of orthodox accounts of the state by highlighting the functions of such accounts within the political system. And, in relation to autopoietic theorizing at least, it provides additional, systems-theoretical reasons for disputing that the modern state could ever be a superordinate, sovereign authority standing above society and controlling it from outside. I explore more fully the implications of such 'stateless' theorizing about the state in the concluding section of my paper.

III - New Directions of Research

Notwithstanding a declining interest in the more esoteric and abstract modes of theorizing about the state, substantive research on states and state power has enjoyed an explosive growth in recent years. It is impossible to review even a small fraction of the resulting literature. But it is worth mentioning five themes that seem to have attracted considerable attention from various perspectives and might well offer a useful point of confrontation between the different theoretical approaches outlined above. These are the historical variability of statehood (or stateness); the relative strength or weakness of states; the future of the national state in an alleged era of globalization and regionalization; issues of scale, space, territoriality, and the state; and the rise of governance mechanisms and their articulation with government. None of these issues can be addressed without moving away from the sort of abstract theorizing that characterized early stages in the rediscovery of the state and all five pose the sort of theoretical and empirical problems which only well-developed and sophisticated theoretical frameworks could ever hope to decipher.

First, interest in stateness has been prompted both by growing disquiet about the abstract character of much state theory (especially its assumption of a ubiquitous, unified, sovereign state) and by an increasing interest in the historical variability of actual states. This has led some theorists to focus on the state as a conceptual variable and to examine the varied presence of the idea of the state (Nettl 1968; Dyson 1982; Melossi 1990). Others have examined the state's differential presence as a distinctive political form. Thus Badie and Birnbaum usefully distinguish between the political centre required in any complex social division of labour and the state as but one possible institutional locus of this centre. For them, the defining features of the state are its structural differentiation, autonomy, universalism, and institutional solidity. They see France as having the archetypal state in a centralized society;



Britain has a political centre but no state; Germany has a state but no centre; and the Helvetian Confederation (Switzerland) has no state and no centre (Badie and Birnbaum 1983). Such approaches are important because they historicize the state idea and stress the wide variety of its institutional forms. A growing number of studies have explored these issues on all territorial or scales from the local to the international with considerable concern for meso-level variation.

Second, if stateness as a variable concerns the institutionalization of the state as such, interest in strong and weak states concerns the factors that make for state strength. This can be interpreted in two ways: internally it refers to a state's capacities to exercise authority over society, externally it refers to the state's power in the international community of states (on the latter, see especially Handel 1990). This concern is often linked with interest in the state's capacity to penetrate and organize the rest of society. It is especially marked in recent theoretical and empirical work on predatory and/or developmental states. Whereas the predatory state is essentially parasitic upon its economy and civil society, the developmental state has proved itself capable of developing one or both of them. Whereas predatory states have a significant measure of despotic power, developmental states enjoy a balance of despotic power and infrastructural power and wield it in market-conforming ways (e.g., Castells 1992; Evans 1985, 1995; Johnson 1987; Levi 1988; Weiss 1998; Weiss and Hobson 1995). One problem with much of this literature is that it uses a blanket contrast between strong and weak states. In addition there is a wide variety of different interpretations of strength (and weakness) which further threatens coherent analysis. (16) Most seriously, some of the literature runs the risk of tautology to the extent that strength is defined purely in terms of outcomes (for reviews, see Clark and Lemco 1988; Lauridsen 1991; Migdal 1988; Önis 1991; Waldner 1999). A possible solution is to allow for more variability in state capacities by policy area, over time, and in specific conjunctures. This in turn calls for a 'strategic-relational' approach (see below).

Third, recent work on globalization has increasingly called into question the future of the national state. This issue was already posed, of course, during earlier debates on the internationalization of finance and the activities of multinational firms. It has become more pressing with the emergence of the triadic economic blocs (North America, Europe, and East Asia), development of cross-border regional cooperation, and the re-emergence or re-discovery of cities, regions, and industrial districts as major bases of (international) competitiveness. Fourth, and closely linked to the previous issue, is the problem of the changing scale of politics. While some theorists are inclined to see the crisis of the national state as displacing the primary scale of political organization and action to either the global or the regional scale, others suggest that there has been a relativization of scale. For, whereas the national state provided the primary scale of political organization in the economic space and period of Atlantic Fordism, the current after-Fordist period is characterized by a marked dispersion of political and policy issues across different scales of organization, with none of them obviously primary. This in turn poses particularly difficult problems about securing the coherence of action across different scales (for different approaches to both issues, see Brenner 1999; Caporaso 1996; Evers 1994; Hirst and Thompson 1995; Jessop 1999; Mann 1993; Scharpf 1999; Schmitter 1992; Taylor 1995; Zürn 1992; Ziebura 1992).

Finally, if the period of Atlantic Fordism was largely dominated by concerns about the relationship between state and market, the current theoretical and empirical agenda is much concerned with 'governance'. This concerns forms of coordination or concertation that rely neither on governmental hierarchies nor on the anarchy of the market but are characterized by self-organization. Governance is emerging on different scales of organization (ranging from the expansion of international and supra-national regimes through national and regional public-private partnerships to more localized networks of power and decision-making. Although this trend is often taken to imply a diminution in state capacities, it has also been seen as enhancing its power to secure its interests and, indeed, as providing states with a new (or expanded) role in the meta-governance (or overall coordination) of different governance regimes and mechanisms (on governance, see, for example, Jessop 1995; Kitschelt 1991; Kooiman 1993; Messner 1998; Pierre 1999; Scharpf, 1999; Streeck and Schmitter 1985).



IV -- An Emerging Agenda?

Recent state theorizing and state research are much more diverse than that which occurred during the 1970s. Yet the different currents reviewed above often seem to have followed a similar trajectory or learning curve to that pursued by the Marxist debate. The latter originated in a critique of the alleged reformist illusions of social democratic and/or pluralist accounts of the state and was concerned to show why the state in a capitalist society was also and necessarily a capitalist state. It was later forced into growing recognition of the contingency of state forms and regimes and the variation in state capacities and performance. And this in turn encouraged the abandonment of highly abstract theorizing with its premature closure of many issues and shifted the analysis to more concrete, institutional levels. This emphasis on contingency helps to explain the development of the two insights noted in section one: that form problematizes function and that the state is an institutional ensemble that has variable structural selectivity and strategic capacities.

Other currents discussed here have encountered similar problems -- most notably feminist state theories. These have also shown increasing interest in what one can call the strategically selective gendering of the state and its structural coupling with other institutional orders in society (see also Jessop 2001). And, on a more practical level, feminists have discovered some of the problems involved in working both in and against the gendered state (e.g., Connell 1990; Watson 1990). Likewise, despite its disposition to reify the state-society distinction, state-centred theorizing has always emphasized the difference that specific regimes make to the nature and impact of the political process. Moreover, even if Foucauldian analyses have always shown less interest in more abstract structural properties of the state, they have been very sensitive to the constitutive role of political practices and statecraft in shaping regimes and their governmental capacities (see, for example, the contributions in Gordon 1991). In addition, autopoietic theory, having initially reduced the state to little more than a self-description of the political system, has more recently come to stress the variability of its infrastructural capacities, the problematic relationship between its radical operational autonomy and the systematic interdependence of different institutional orders, and the 'ironic' (17) role of political discourse in guiding social evolution (cf. Willke 1992). Conversely, it remains an enduring weakness of purely discourse-analytic research on the state that it lacks the conceptual apparatus to comprehend the structural selectivity of the state system or the variability of the state's capacities and vulnerabilities (see further: Jessop 1990). In short, with all due recognition of the obvious differences between the different theoretical approaches reviewed above, it is nonetheless possible to identify a remarkable convergence on a small and significant set of themes grounded in the growing recognition of the contingency of the state apparatus and state power. (18)

In identifying these themes and spelling them out we can also identify a useful research agenda for a third generation of state theorizing. This exercise is certainly not intended to exclude alternative agendas nor prejudge the results of the next round of debate (for an alternative agenda, for example, see Smith 2000). In noting areas of convergence as well as divergence, however, it may serve to highlight critical theoretical issues and research topics that may help to resolve disputes among different approaches.

Firstly, all these approaches seem to agree in dethroning the state from its superordinate position within society and analyzing it simply as one institutional order among others. Marxists no longer treat it as the ideal collective capitalist; neo-statists no longer treat it as a sovereign legal subject; it has been deconstructed by Foucauldians; feminists no longer view it simply as the patriarch general; and discourse analysts and autopoieticists alike see it as constituted, ironically or otherwise, through contingent discursive or communicative practices. In short, the state is seen as an emergent, partial, and unstable system that is interdependent with other systems in a complex social order. This has vastly expanded the realm of contingency in the state and its operations and this implies the need for more concrete, historically specific, institutionally sensitive, and action-oriented research. All of the theoretical schools discussed above are concerned in their different ways to provide such analyses. Such concerns are also shaping the growing body of substantive research into stateness and the relative strength (and weakness) of particular political regimes. All of this marks an important general advance on the loose talk which equates the state to a simple thing or



subject and/or fails to consider its variability as a complex social relation within (let alone across) given social formations.

For, fourthly, these structural powers and capacities cannot be understood by focusing on the state alone. For the state should be analyzed in a 'strategic-relational' context (cf. Bertramsen et al., 1990). By virtue of its structural selectivity and always specific strategic capacities, its powers will always be conditional or relational. Their realization depends on the structural ties between the state and its encompassing political system, the strategic links among state managers and other political forces, and the complex web of interdependencies and social networks linking the state and political system to its broader environment. It is here that neo-statism often proves weak due to its tendency to reify the state-society distinction and that discourse-analytic work often misses the deep-rooted, extra-discursive structural conditions that shape the effectiveness of state power. But the other approaches considered in this article would find few difficulties in subscribing to this theme.

This suggests, finally, that an adequate theory of the state can only be produced as part of a wider theory of society. Even the neo-statists' principled rejection of a society-centred approach draws on arguments about the wider society both to reveal the state's distinctive logic and interests and to explore the conditions for its autonomy and effectiveness. Foucauldian, feminist, and discourse-analytic studies are even more clearly oriented to wider concerns: Foucault starts from a socially dispersed micro-physics of power, feminism is concerned with gender relations, and stateless state theory begins from the discursive constitution of the state. Recent Marxist work also continues, of course, to relate the state to capitalism and the anatomy of civil society. This involves an important redirection of work on the state and state power. But it is precisely on this terrain that many of the unresolved problems of state theory are located. For the state is the site of a paradox. On the one hand, it is just one institutional ensemble among others within a social formation; on the other, it is peculiarly charged with overall responsibility for maintaining the cohesion of the social formation of which it is a part. Its paradoxical position as both part and whole of society means that it is continually called upon by diverse social forces to resolve society's problems and is equally continually doomed to generate 'state failure' since so many of society's problems lie well beyond its control and can even be aggravated by attempted intervention. Many of the differences between theories of the state considered above are rooted in contrary approaches to various structural and strategic moments of this paradox. Trying to comprehend the overall logic (or, perhaps, 'illogic') of this paradox may well be the best route to resolving some of these differences as well as providing a more comprehensive analysis of the strategic-relational character of the state in a polycentric social formation.

Notes

(1) This is a lightly revised version of a paper presented at the International Political Science Association Conference, Quebec City, 1st-5th August 2000. The latter in turn is a revised and updated version of a review of state theory that appeared in Danish (Jessop 1998). Different versions have benefited from the comments of Colin Hay, Paul Reynolds, and Ngai-Ling Sum.

(2) For useful reviews of such Marxist theorizing, see Barrow 1993; Jessop 1977; Carnoy 1984; Chandhoke 1995; Clarke 1990; Altvater and Hoffman 1990; Thomas 1994; and, on Marxist-feminism, Mahon 1991; Burstyn 1983.

(3) On critical theory and the state, see Horkheimer 1942/1973; Kirchheimer 1969; Neumann 1964. For an accessible introduction to the Frankfurt School, see Held 1980.

(4) For various criticisms of these positions, see: Carnoy 1984; Jessop 1977, 1982, 1990; Offe 1972; Poulantzas 1978.

(5) As we shall see below, it is no accident that these are all male thinkers.

(6) Even Weber's work can be interpreted differently: it has been invoked, for example, to show that the state does not exist but is a reflexive use of ideas to enhance the legitimacy of a ruling elite (Melossi 1990: 63-5).

(7) In my earlier critique of neo-statism, only four of these were listed (see Jessop 1990); the fifth set of charges, listed second here, is just as important.



- (8) For a critique of the Foucauldian pretensions of Giddens, see Boyne (1991).
- (9) There are four such faces: (a) juridical-legislative or liberal (a proper focus for feminist jurisprudence); (b) capitalist -- property rights and capitalism; (c) prerogative -- legitimate arbitrary power marking the state as a state (police, military, security); and (d) bureaucratic (Brown 1992: 13-14).
- (10) MacKinnon's position is ambivalent in this regard: she treats law as patriarchal because it is gender-blind and gender interests themselves are pre-given (1983).
- (11) In distinguishing between discourses, institutions, and material practices, I am not trying to deny the materiality of discourses nor suggesting that institutions or material practices are non-discursive. I am simply noting that not all discourses are translated into institutions and material practices with emergent properties that are irreducible to the content of these discourses.
- (12) This pithy statement comes from Moore (1957).
- (13) Feminists usually criticize the oppressive effects of the public-private split; but Elshtain has argued that women who go public must sacrifice the maternal values that are rooted in family life (1981).
- (14) This is suggested, for example, in Abrams 1977/1988: 77.
- (15) It is impossible to give an adequate account of autopoietic systems theory in this article: for introductions, see Luhmann (1995) and Jessop (1990).
- (16) Thus states have been described as strong because they have a large public sector, authoritarian rule, strong societal support, a weak and gelatinous civil society, cohesive bureaucracies, an interventionist policy, or the power to limit external interference (cf. Lauridsen 1991: 117).
- (17) It is ironic in the Rortyan sense of political commitment aware of its own contingency and likely future alteration: see Rorty 1989 and Willke 1992.
- (18) I first identified these themes in my book on State Theory (1990). There is clearly a danger in reading other theoretical trajectories in terms of such a convergence but, with all due caution, it does seem that the following themes are increasingly widespread and are informing current research on the state.

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