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Society, Economy, and the State Effect

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The state is an object of analysis that appears to exist simultaneously as material force and as ideological construct. It seems both real and illusory. This paradox presents a particular problem in any attempt to build a theory of the state. The network of institutional arrangement and political practice that forms the material substance of the state is diffuse and ambiguously defined at its edges, whereas the public imagery of the state as an ideological construct is more coherent. The scholarly analysis of the state is liable to reproduce in its own analytical tidiness this imaginary coherence and misrepresent the incoherence of state practice.

Drawing attention to this liability, Philip Abrams (1988) argues that we should distinguish between two objects of analysis, the state-system and the state-idea. The first refers to the state as a system of institutionalized practice, the second refers to the reification of this system that takes on "an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice as an illusory account of practice." We should avoid mistaking the latter for the former, he suggests, by "attending to the senses in which the state does not exist rather than those in which it does" (82).

This seems a sensible suggestion. But if the coherence and definition of the state arise from the state-idea, then subtracting this from the state's existence as a system of power makes the limits of the system difficult to define. Foucault argues that the system of power extends well beyond state: "One cannot confine oneself to analyzing the State apparatus alone if one wants to grasp the mechanisms of power in their detail and complexity . . . ," he suggests. "In reality, power in its exercise goes much further, passes through much finer channels, and is much more ambiguous" (1980a: 72). If so, how does one define the state apparatus (as even Foucault still implies one should) and locate its limits? At what point does power enter channels fine enough and its exercise become ambiguous enough that one recognizes the edge of this apparatus? Where is the exterior that enables one to identify it as an apparatus?

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The answers cannot be found by trying to separate the material forms of the state from the ideological, or the real from the illusory. The state-idea and the state-system are better seen as two aspects of the same process. To be more precise, the phenomenon we name "the state" arises from techniques that enable mundane material practices to take on the appearance of an abstract, nonmaterial form. Any attempt to distinguish the abstract or ideal appearance of the state from its material reality, in taking for granted this distinction, will fail to understand it. The task of a theory of the state is not to clarify such distinctions but to historicize them.

In American social science of the postwar period, there have been two distinct responses to the difficulty of relating practice and ideology in the concept of the state. The first was to abandon *the state*, as a term too ideological and too narrow to be the basis for theoretical development, replacing it with the idea of *political system*. In rejecting the ideological, however, systems theorists found themselves with no way of defining the limits of the system. Their empiricism had promised precise definitions, but instead they were unable to draw any line distinguishing the political order from the wider society in which it functioned.

The second response, from the later 1970s, was to "bring the state back in" (Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985). The new literature defined the state in a variety of ways, most of which took it to be not just distinguishable from society but autonomous from it. To reestablish the elusive line between the two, however, the literature made the state-society distinction correspond to a distinction between subjective and objective, or ideal and real. It did so by reducing the state to a subjective system of decision making, a narrow conception that failed to fit even the evidence that the state theorists themselves present.

An alternative approach must begin with the assumption that we must take seriously the elusiveness of the boundary between state and society, not as a problem of conceptual precision but as a clue to the nature of the phenomenon. Rather than hoping we can find a definition that will fix the state-society boundary (as a preliminary to demonstrating how the object on one side of it influences or is autonomous from what lies on the other), we need to examine the political processes through which the uncertain yet powerful distinction between state and society is produced.

A theory of the contemporary state also must examine the parallel distinction constructed between state and economy. In the twentieth century, creating this opposition has become a perhaps more significant method of articulating the power of the state. Yet the boundary between state and economy represents a still more elusive distinction than that between state and society.

We must take such distinctions not as the boundary between two discrete entities but as a line drawn internally, within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a social and political order is maintained. The ability to have an internal distinction appear as though it were the external boundary between separate objects is the distinctive technique of the modern political order. One must examine the technique from a historical perspective (something most literature on the state fails to do), as the consequence of certain novel practices of the technical age. In particular, one can trace it to methods of organization,

arrangement, and representation that operate within the social practices they govern, yet create the effect of an enduring structure apparently external to those practices. This approach to the state accounts for the salience of the phenomenon but avoids attributing to it the coherence, unity, and absolute autonomy that result from existing theoretical approaches.

Abandoning the State

When American social scientists eliminated the term *state* from their vocabulary in the 1950s, they claimed that the word suffered from two related weaknesses: its "ideological" use as a political myth, as a "symbol for unity," produced disagreement about exactly what it referred to (Easton 1953: 110–12); and even if agreement might be reached, these symbolic references of the term excluded significant aspects of the modern political process (106–15). These factors do not themselves account for the rejection of the concept of the state, however, for scholars had been disclosing its weaknesses and ambiguities for decades (Sabine 1934). What made the weaknesses suddenly significant was the changed postwar relationship between American political science and American political power. We can see this by rereading what was written at the time. Postwar comparative politics, according to a 1944 APSA report discussing the future "mission" of the discipline, would have to relinquish its narrow concern with the study of the state ("the descriptive analysis of foreign institutions") to become "a conscious instrument of social engineering" (Loewenstein 1944: 541). Scholars would use this intellectual machinery for "imparting our experience to other nations and . . . integrating scientifically their institutions into a universal pattern of government" (547). To achieve these ends, the discipline had to expand its geographical and theoretical territory and become what the report called "a 'total' science" (541). "We can no longer permit the existence of white spots on our map of the world," the report said, employing metaphors reflecting the imperial ambition of postwar American politics. "The frontier posts of comparative government must be moved boldly" (543), both to encompass the globe and, by expanding into the territory of other disciplines (anthropology, psychology, economics, and statistics), to open up each country to far more detailed methods of observation and questioning and thereby "gain access to the true Gestalt of foreign political civilizations" (541).

Political science had to expand its boundaries to match the growth of postwar U.S. power, whose ambitions it would offer to serve. Borrowing concepts and research methods from fields such as anthropology, political science planned not simply to shift its concern from state to society but to open up the workings of the political process to far closer inspection. The field was to become a discipline of detail, pushing its investigation into the meticulous examination of the activities of political groups, the behavior of social actors, even the motivations of individual psyches.

The opening of this new territory to scientific investigation seemed even more urgent by the 1950s, when postwar American optimism had turned into political uncertainty. It was what Easton (1953: 3) gravely called "our present social crisis"—the launching of the cold war and the accompanying domestic campaign against the Left—that made suddenly imperative the elimination of ambiguity from political vocabulary and the construction of general social-scientific laws broad enough to include all significant political phenomena and "pass beyond the experience . . . of any one culture" (319).

The *Suggested Research Strategy in Western European Government and Politics*, proposed in 1955 by the new Comparative Politics Committee of the Social Science Research Council chaired by Gabriel Almond, criticized once again the "too great an emphasis on the formal aspects of institutions and processes," but now spoke of the need for a change in terms of "urgent and practical considerations." In the major western European countries, the committee reported, "large bodies of opinion appear to be alienated from the West, politically apathetic, or actively recruited to Communism." The state was too narrow and formal a focus for research because "the basic problems of civic loyalty and political cohesion lie in large part outside of the formal government framework." Research was needed that would trace the degree of political cohesion and loyalty to the West beyond this formal framework "into the networks of social groupings, and the attitudes of the general population." Such close examination could confirm the committee's expectation that, in cases such as France, "there is at least the possibility of breaking the hold of the Communist party on a large part of its following" (Almond, Cole, and Macridis 1955: 1045).

Responding to the needs of the cold war, the discipline also expanded its geographical territory. In his foreword to *The Appeals of Communism*, Almond claimed that Communism had now begun to spread to non-Western areas, and warned that this was "so menacing a development that it is deserving of special attention" (Almond 1954: vii). These global concerns were the stimulus to the research undertaken in the late 1950s and subsequently published as *The Civic Culture*. The book's introduction addressed itself to the pressing need to export to the colonized areas of the world, now seeking their independence, the principles of the Anglo-American political process. To this end, it sought to codify not just the formal institutional rules of the state but the "subtler components" that formed its "social-psychological preconditions"—that combination of democratic spirit and proper deference toward authority that was celebrated as "the civic culture" (Almond and Verba 1963: 5).

The scientific tone of this literature offered the empiricism of political science an alternative to the concept of the state and its "ideological" (that is, Marxist) connotations. Yet abandoning the traditional focus on the institutions of state created a science whose new object, the political system, had no discernible limit. The ever-expanding empirical and theoretical knowledge that would have to be mastered by the future scientists of comparative politics, Almond warned in 1960, "staggers the imagination and lames the will." Despite the initial tendency "to blink and withdraw in pain," he wrote, there could be no hesitation in the effort to accumulate the knowledge that will "enable us to take our place in the order of the sciences with the dignity which is reserved for those who follow a calling without limit or condition" (Almond and Coleman 1960: 64).

Advocates of the shift from the formal study of the state to the meticulous examination of political systems realized they were embarking on a scientific enterprise "without limit." They assumed, however, that the very notion of political system would somehow solve the question of limits, for, as Almond wrote, it implied the "existence of boundaries"—the points "where other systems end and the political system begins." The boundary required a "sharp definition," otherwise "we will find ourselves including in the political system churches, economies, schools, kinship and lineage groups, age-sets, and the like" (Almond and Coleman 1960: 5, 7–8; see also Easton 1957: 384). Yet this is precisely what happened. The edge of the system turned out to consist of not a sharp line but every conceivable form of collective expression of political demand, from "institutional" groups such as legislatures, churches, and armies, to "associated" groups such as labor or business organizations, "nonassociated" groups such as kinship or ethnic communities, and "anomic" groups such as spontaneous riots and demonstrations (Almond and Coleman 1960: 33).

In attempting to eliminate the ambiguity of a concept whose ideological functions prevented scientific precision, the systems approach substituted an object whose very boundary unfolded into a limitless and undetermined terrain.

The Return of the State

The attempt in the 1950s and 1960s to eliminate the concept of the state was unsuccessful. The notion of political system was too imprecise and unworkable to establish itself as an alternative. But there were several other reasons for the return of the state. First, by the late 1960s it was clear that U.S. influence in the third world could not be built on the creation of "civic cultures." Modernization seemed to require the creation of powerful authoritarian states, as Huntington argued in 1968.

Second, from the late 1960s a more powerful critique of modernization theory was developed by neo-Marxist scholars in Latin America, the Middle East, and Europe. Samir Amin, Cardoso and Faletto, Gunder Frank, and others produced theories of capitalist development in which an important place was given to the nature and role of the third world state. As Paul Cammack (1989, 1990) suggests, this literature obliged U.S. scholars to "return to the state" in an effort to reappropriate the concept by drawing on neo-Marxist scholarship and in most cases denying the significance of the underlying Marxian framework.

Third, in most countries of the West, the language of political debate continued to refer to the institutions of the state and to the role of the state in the economy and society. In 1968, J. P. Nettl pointed out that although the concept was out of fashion in the social sciences, it retained a popular currency that "no amount of conceptual restructuring can dissolve" (1968: 559). The state, he wrote, is "essentially a sociocultural phenomenon" that occurs due to the "cultural disposition" among a population to recognize what he called the state's "conceptual existence" (565–66). Notions of the state "become incorporated in the thinking and actions of individual citizens" (577), he argued, and the extent

of this conceptual variable could be shown to correspond to important empirical differences between societies, such as differences in legal structure or party system (579–92).

Clearly, the importance of the state as a common ideological and cultural construct should be grounds not for dismissing the phenomenon but for taking it seriously. Yet Nettl's understanding of this construct as a subjective disposition that could be correlated with more objective phenomena remained thoroughly empiricist. A construct such as the state occurs not merely as a subjective belief, but as a representation reproduced in visible everyday forms, such as the language of legal practice, the architecture of public buildings, the wearing of military uniforms, or the marking and policing of frontiers. The ideological forms of the state are an empirical phenomenon, as solid and discernible as a legal structure or a party system. Or rather, as I contend here, the distinction made between a conceptual realm and an empirical one needs to be placed in question if one is to understand the nature of a phenomenon such as the state.

Mainstream social science did not raise such questions. In fact the conceptual/empirical distinction provided the unexamined conceptual base on which to reintroduce the idea of the state. During the later 1970s, the state reemerged as a central analytic concern of American social science. "The lines between state and society have become blurred," warned Stephen Krasner in *Defending the National Interest* (1978: xi), one of the early contributions to this reemergence. "The basic analytic assumption" of the statist approach it advocated "is that there is a distinction between state and society" (5). The new literature presented this fundamental but problematic distinction, as in Nettl's article, in terms of an underlying distinction between a conceptual realm (the state) and an empirical realm (society). Such an approach appeared to overcome the problem the systems theorists complained about and reencountered, of how to discern the boundary between state and society: it was to be assimilated to the apparently obvious distinction between conceptual and empirical, between a subjective order and an objective one. As I have shown elsewhere, however, this depended on both an enormous narrowing of the phenomenon of the state and an uncritical acceptance of this distinction (Mitchell 1991).

State-centered approaches to political explanation presented the state as an autonomous entity whose actions were not reducible to or determined by forces in society. This approach required not so much a shift in focus, from society back to the state, but some way of reestablishing a clear boundary between the two. How were the porous edges where official practice mixes with the semiofficial and the latter with the unofficial to be turned into lines of separation, so that the state could stand apart as a discrete, self-directing object? The popular Weberian definition of the state, as an organization that claims a monopoly within a fixed territory over the legitimate use of violence, is only a residual characterization. It does not explain how the actual contours of this amorphous organization are to be drawn.

The new theorists of the state did not fill in the organizational contours. They retreated to narrower definitions, which typically grasped the state as a system of decision making. The narrower focus locates the essence of the state not in the

monopolistic organization of coercion, nor, for example, in the structures of a legal order, nor in the mechanisms by which social interests find political representation, nor in the arrangements that maintain a given relationship between the producers of capital and its owners, but in the formation and expression of authoritative intentions. Construed as a machinery of intentions—usually termed *rule making, decision making*, or *policymaking*—state becomes essentially a subjective realm of plans, programs, or ideas. This subjective construction maps the problematic state-society distinction on to the seemingly more obvious distinctions we make between the subjective and the objective, between the ideological and the material, or even between meaning and reality. The state appears to stand apart from society in the unproblematic way in which intentions or ideas are thought to stand apart from the external world to which they refer.

Elsewhere I have illustrated these problems in detail through a discussion of some of the leading contributions to the literature (Mitchell 1991). Even those who describe their approach as institutionalist, such as Theda Skocpol (1979, 1981), can demonstrate the alleged autonomy of the state only by appealing to a subjective interest or ideology of the ruler. When the account turns to wider institutional processes, the distinction between state and society fades away.

An Alternative Approach

The state-centered literature begins from the assumption that the state is a distinct entity, opposed to and set apart from a larger entity called society. Arguments are confined to assessing the degree of independence one object enjoys from the other. Yet in fact the line between the two is often uncertain. Like the systems theorists before them, the state theorists are unable to fix the elusive boundary between the political system or state and society. Cammack (1990, 1989) is surely correct to assert that the state theorists fail to refute the argument that modern states enjoy only a relative separation from the interests of dominant social classes and that their policies can be explained adequately only in relation to the structure of class relations. But then the questions remain: how is this relative separation of the state from society produced? And how is the effect created that the separation is an absolute one? These are questions that not even neo-Marxist theories of the state have addressed adequately.

To introduce an answer to these questions, I begin with a case discussed in Stephen Krasner's study of U.S. government policy toward the corporate control of foreign raw materials: the relationship between the U.S. government and the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco), the consortium of major U.S. oil corporations that possessed exclusive rights to Saudi Arabian oil (Krasner 1978: 205–12). The case illustrates both the permeability of the state-society boundary and the political significance of maintaining it. After World War II, the Saudis demanded that their royalty payment from Aramco be increased from 12 percent to 50 percent of profits. Unwilling either to cut its profits or to raise the price

of oil, Aramco arranged for the increase in royalty to be paid not by the company but in effect by U.S. taxpayers. The Department of State, anxious to subsidize the pro-American Saudi monarchy, helped arrange for Aramco to evade U.S. tax law by treating the royalty as though it were a direct foreign tax, paid not from the company's profits but from the taxes it owed to the U.S. Treasury (Anderson 1981: 179–497). This collusion between government and oil companies, obliging U.S. citizens to contribute unknowingly to the treasury of a repressive Middle Eastern monarchy and to the bank balances of some of the world's largest and most profitable multinational corporations, does not offer much support for the image of a neat distinction between state and society.

Krasner copes with this complexity by arguing that the oil companies were "an institutional mechanism" used by central decision makers to achieve certain foreign policy goals, in this case the secret subsidizing of a conservative Arab regime. Policies that might be opposed by Congress or foreign allies could be pursued through such mechanisms "in part because private firms were outside of the formal political system" (1978: 212–13). This explanation offers only one side of the picture: the firms themselves also used the U.S. government to further corporate goals, as the Aramco case illustrates and as several studies of the oil industry have demonstrated in detail (Anderson 1981; Blair 1976; Miller 1980).

Yet despite its failure to portray the complexity of such state-society relations, Krasner's explanation does inadvertently point to what is crucial about them. The Aramco case illustrates how the "institutional mechanisms" of a modern political order are never confined within the limits of what is called the state (or in this case, curiously enough, the "formal political system"). This is not to say simply that the state is something surrounded by parastatal or corporatist institutions, which buttress and extend its authority. It is to argue that the boundary of the state (or political system) never marks a real exterior. The line between state and society is not the perimeter of an intrinsic entity that can be thought of as a freestanding object or actor. It is a line drawn internally, within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a certain social and political order is maintained. The point that the state's boundary never marks a real exterior suggests why it seems so often elusive and unstable. But this does not mean the line is illusory. On the contrary, as the Aramco case shows, producing and maintaining the distinction between state and society is itself a mechanism that generates resources of power. The fact that Aramco can be said to lie outside the "formal political system," thereby disguising its role in international politics, is essential to its strength as part of a larger political order.

One could explore many similar examples, such as the relationship between state and "private" institutions in the financial sector, in schooling and scientific research, or in health care and medical practice. In each case one could show that the state-society divide is not a simple border between two freestanding objects or domains, but a complex distinction internal to these realms of practice. Take the example of banking: the relations between major corporate banking groups, semipublic central banks or reserve systems, government treasuries, deposit insurance agencies and export-import banks (which subsidize up to 40 percent of

exports of industrialized nations), and multinational bodies such as the World Bank (whose head is appointed by the president of the United States) represent interlocking networks of financial power and regulation. No simple line could divide this network into a private realm and a public one or into state and society or state and economy. At the same time, banks are set up and present themselves as private institutions clearly separate from the state. The appearance that state and society or economy are separate things is part of the way a given financial and economic order is maintained. This is equally true of the wider social and political order. The power to regulate and control is not simply a capacity stored within the state, from where it extends out into society. The apparent boundary of the state does not mark the limit of the processes of regulation. It is itself a product of those processes.

Another example is that of law. The legal system, a central component of the modern state when conceived in structural terms, consists of a complex system of rights, statutes, penalties, enforcement agencies, litigants, legal personnel, prisons, rehabilitation systems, psychiatrists, legal scholars, libraries, and law schools, in which the exact dividing line between the legal structure and the "society" it structures is once again very difficult to locate. In practice we tend to simplify the distinction by thinking of the law as an abstract code and society as the realm of its practical application. Yet this fails to correspond to the complexities of what actually occurs, where code and practice tend to be inseparable aspects of one another. The approach to the state advocated here does not imply an image of the state and private organizations as a single totalized structure of power. On the contrary, there are always conflicts between them, as there are between different government agencies, between corporate organizations, and within each of them. It means that we should not be misled into taking for granted the idea of the state as a coherent object clearly separate from "society"—any more than we should be misled by the vagueness and complexity of these phenomena into rejecting the concept of the state altogether.

Conceived in this way, the state is no longer to be taken as essentially an actor, with the coherence, agency, and autonomy this term presumes. The multiple arrangements that produce the apparent separateness of the state create effects of agency and partial autonomy, with concrete consequences. Yet such agency will always be contingent on the production of difference—those practices that create the apparent boundary between state and society. These arrangements may be so effective, however, as to make things appear the reverse of this. The state comes to seem an autonomous starting point, as an actor that intervenes in society. Statist approaches to political analysis take this reversal for reality.

What we need instead is an approach to the state that refuses to take for granted this dualism, yet accounts for why social and political reality appears in this binary form. It is not sufficient simply to criticize the abstract idealist appearance the state assumes in the state-centered literature. Gabriel Almond, for example, complains that the concept of the state employed in much of the new literature "seems to have metaphysical overtones" (1987: 476), and David Easton argues that the state is presented by one writer as an "undefinable essence, a

'ghost in the machine,' knowable only through its variable manifestations" (1981: 316). Such criticisms ignore the fact that this is how the state very often appears in practice. The task of a critique of the state is not just to reject such metaphysics, but to explain how it has been possible to produce this practical effect, so characteristic of the modern political order. What is it about modern society, as a particular form of social and economic order, that has made possible the apparent autonomy of the state as a freestanding entity? Why is this kind of apparatus, with its typical basis in an abstract system of law, its symbiotic relation with the sphere we call the economy, and its almost transcendental association with the "nation" as the fundamental political community, the distinctive political arrangement of the modern age? What particular practices and techniques have continually reproduced the ghost-like abstraction of the state, so that despite the effort to have the term "polished off a quarter of a century ago," as Easton (303) puts it, it has returned "to haunt us once again"?

The new theorists of the state ignore these historical questions. Even works that adopt a historical perspective, such as Skocpol's (1979) comparative study of revolutions, are unable to offer a historical explanation of the appearance of the modern state. Committed to an approach in which the state is an independent cause, Skocpol cannot explain the ability of the state to appear as an entity standing apart from society in terms of factors external to the state. The state must be an independent cause of events, even when those events, as in a case such as revolutionary France, involve the very birth of a modern, apparently autonomous state.

Discipline and Government

To illustrate the kind of explanation that might be possible, one can turn to Skocpol's account of the French state. She describes prerevolutionary France as a "statist" society, meaning a society in which the power and privileges of a landed nobility and the power of the central administration were inextricably bound together. We can now describe this situation another way, as a society in which those modern techniques that make the state appear to be a separate entity that somehow stands outside society had not yet been institutionalized. The revolutionary period represents the consolidation of such novel techniques. Skocpol characterizes the revolutionary transformation of the French state as principally a transformation in the army and the bureaucracy, both of which became permanent professional organizations whose staffs were for the first time set apart from other commercial and social activities and whose size and effectiveness were vastly extended. For Skocpol, such changes are to be understood as the consequence of an autonomous state, whose officials desired to embark on the expansion and consolidation of centralized power. We are therefore given little detail about the techniques on which such revolutionary transformations rested.

How was it now possible to assemble a permanent army of up to three-

quarters of a million men, transform an entire economy into production for war, maintain authority and discipline on such a scale, and so "separate" this military machine from society that the traditional problem of desertion was overcome? By what parallel means were the corruptions and leakages of financial administration brought under control? What was the nature of the "mechanical efficiency and articulation," in a phrase quoted from J. F. Bosher (Skocpol 1979: 200), that in every realm would now enable "the virtues of organization to offset the vices of individual men"? What kind of "articulation," in other words, could now seem to separate mechanically an "organization" from the "individual men" who composed it? Rather than attributing such transformations to policies of an autonomous state, it is more accurate to trace in these new techniques of organization and articulation the very possibility of appearing to set apart from society the freestanding apparatus of a state.

An exploration of such questions has to begin by acknowledging the enormous significance of those small-scale polymorphous methods of order that Foucault calls disciplines. The new bureaucratic and military strength of the French state was founded on powers generated from the meticulous organization of space, movement, sequence, and position. The new power of the army, for example, was based on such measures as the construction of barracks as sites of permanent confinement set apart from the social world, the introduction of daily inspection and drill, repetitive training in maneuvers broken down into precisely timed sequences and combinations, and the elaboration of complex hierarchies of command, spatial arrangement, and surveillance. With such techniques, an army could be made into what a contemporary military manual called an "artificial machine," and other armies now seemed like collections of "idle and inactive men" (Fuller 1955: vol. 2: 196).

Disciplinary power has two consequences for understanding the modern state—only the first of which is analyzed by Foucault. In the first place, one moves beyond the image of power as essentially a system of sovereign commands or policies backed by force. This approach is adopted by almost all recent theorists of the state. It conceives of state power in the form of a person (an individual or collective decision maker), whose decisions form a system of orders and prohibitions that direct and constrain social action. Power is thought of as an exterior constraint: its source is a sovereign authority above and outside society, and it operates by setting external limits to behavior, establishing negative prohibitions, and laying down channels of proper conduct.

Discipline, by contrast, works not from the outside but from within, not at the level of an entire society but at the level of detail, and not by constraining individuals and their actions but by producing them. As Foucault puts it, a negative exterior power gives way to an internal productive power. Disciplines work locally, entering social processes, breaking them down into separate functions, rearranging the parts, increasing their efficiency and precision, and reassembling them into more productive and powerful combinations. These methods produce the organized power of armies, schools, bureaucracies, factories, and other distinctive institutions of the technical age. They also produce, within such institutions, the modern individual, constructed as an isolated, disciplined, receptive, and industrious political subject. Power relations do not simply confront this individual as a set of external orders and prohibitions. His or her very individuality, formed within such institutions, is already the product of those relations.

The second consequence of modern political techniques is one that Foucault does not explain. Despite their localized and polyvalent nature, disciplinary powers are somehow consolidated into the territorially based, institutionally structured order of the modern state. Foucault does not dismiss the importance of this larger kind of structure; he simply does not believe that the understanding of power should begin there: "One must rather conduct an ascending analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms . . . and then see how these mechanisms of power have been—and continue to be—invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by ever more general mechanisms . . ., [how they] came to be colonised and maintained by global mechanisms and the entire state system" (Foucault 1980b: 99–101). Yet Foucault does not explain how disciplinary powers do come to be utilized, stabilized, and reproduced in state structures or other "generalized mechanisms."

An example of the relationship between infinitesimal and general mechanisms can be found in law, an issue already discussed above, where the micropowers of disciplinary normalization are structured into the larger apparatus of the legal code and the juridical system. In discussing this case, Foucault falls back on the notion that the general structure is an ideological screen (that of sovereignty and right) superimposed on the real power of discipline. "[O]nce it became necessary for disciplinary constraints to be exercised through mechanisms of domination and yet at the same time for their effective exercise of power to be disguised, a theory of sovereignty was required to make an appearance at the level of the legal apparatus, and to reemerge in its codes" (Foucault 1980b: 106). The organization of law at the general level "allowed a system of right to be superimposed upon the mechanisms of discipline in such a way as to conceal its actual procedures" (105). Foucault steps away again from the implication that the general level is related to the microlevel as a public realm of ideology opposed to the hidden realm of actual power, by recalling that disciplines, too, contain a public discourse. But his studies of disciplinary methods provide no alternative terms to conceive of the way in which local mechanisms of power are related to the larger structural forms, such as law, in which they become institutionalized and reproduced.

In subsequent lectures, Foucault did turn his attention to the large-scale methods of power and control characteristic of the modern state (Foucault 1991). He analyzed the emergence of these methods not in terms of the development of formal institutions, but in the emergence of a new object on which power relations could operate and of new techniques and tactics of power. He identified the new object as population and referred to the new techniques as the powers of "government." Foucault traces the emergence of the problem of population from the eighteenth century, associating it with increases in agricultural production, demographic changes, and an increasing supply of money. Population, he

argues, was an object now seen to have "its own regularities, its own rates of deaths and diseases, its cycles of scarcity, etc.," all susceptible to statistical measurement and political analysis (99). Such analysis produced a whole series of aggregate effects that were not reducible to those of the individual or the household. Politics came to be concerned with the proper management of a population in relation to resources, territory, agriculture, and trade. Population replaced the household as the principal object of politics. The household, or rather the family, was now considered an element internal to population, providing an instrument for obtaining information about and exercising power over the larger, aggregate object (99–100).

To describe this aggregate-level power, Foucault invokes a term that proliferated in the literature of the period, the word "government." For Foucault, the word refers not to the institutions of the state, but to the new tactics of management and methods of security that take population as their object. As with the term *discipline*, government refers to power in terms of its methods rather than its institutional forms. Government draws on the micropowers of discipline; in fact the development of disciplinary methods becomes more acute as they become applied to the problem of population. But government has its own tactics and rationality, expressed in the development of its own field of knowledge, the emerging science of political economy. Foucault also argues that the development of government and of political economy correspond not only to the emergence of population as a new datum and object of power, but also to the separation of the economy as its own sphere. "The word 'economy,' which in the sixteenth century signified a form of government, comes in the eighteenth century to designate a level of reality, a field of intervention" (Foucault 1991: 93). This argument is more problematic.

Conceived in terms of its methods and its object, rather than its institutional forms, government is a broader process than the relatively unified and functionalist entity suggested by the notion of the state. Government is a process "at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on" (Foucault 1991: 103). For this reason, Foucault suggests, the state probably does not have the unity, individuality, and rigorous functionality attributed to it. Indeed it may be "no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think" (103). One can agree with this sentiment, yet still not find in Foucault an answer to the question that is once again raised. If indeed modern governmental power exceeds the limits of the state, if the state lacks the unity and identity it always appears to have, how does this appearance arise? How is the composite reality of the state composed? What tactics and methods in modern forms of power create and recreate this mythicized abstraction? One response to this question is to locate the answer in the phenomenon of the national project. In this view, the state acquires its unity at the level of ideology. Beyond the practical multiplicity of tactics, disciplines, and powers, the state articulates a national project that projects its unity onto society. But such an answer again falls back on the distinction between ideology and practice, instead of placing that distinction in question.

The Appearance of Structure

The relationship between methods of discipline and government and their stabilization in such forms as the state, I argue, lies in the fact that at the same time as power relations become internal, in Foucault's terms, and by the same methods, they now take on the specific appearance of external "structures." The distinctiveness of the modern state, appearing as an apparatus that stands apart from the rest of the social world, is to be found in this novel structural effect. The effect is the counterpart of the production of modern individuality. For example, the new military methods of the late eighteenth century produced the disciplined individual soldier and, simultaneously, the novel effect of an armed unit as an "artificial machine." This military apparatus appeared somehow greater than the sum of its parts, as though it were a structure with an existence independent of the men who composed it. In comparison with other armies, which now looked like amorphous gatherings of "idle and inactive men," the new army seemed something two-dimensional. It appeared to consist on the one hand of individual soldiers and, on the other, of the "machine" they inhabited. Of course this apparatus has no independent existence. It is an effect produced by the organized partitioning of space, the regular distribution of bodies, exact timing, the coordination of movement, the combining of elements, and endless repetition, all of which are particular practices. There was nothing in the new power of the army except this distributing, arranging, and moving. But the order and precision of such processes created the effect of an apparatus apart from the men themselves, whose "structure" orders, contains, and controls them.

A similar two-dimensional effect can be seen at work in other institutions of modern government. The precise specification of space and function that characterize modern institutions, the coordination of these functions into hierarchical arrangements, the organization of supervision and surveillance, the marking out of time into schedules and programs, all contribute to constructing a world that appears to consist not of a complex of social practices but of a binary order: on the one hand individuals and their activities, on the other an inert "structure" that somehow stands apart from individuals, precedes them, and contains and gives a framework to their lives. Indeed the very notion of an institution, as an abstract framework separate from the particular practices it enframes, can be seen as the product of these techniques. Such techniques have given rise to the peculiar, apparently binary world we inhabit, where reality seems to take the two-dimensional form of individual versus apparatus, practice versus institution, social life and its structure—or society versus state (see Mitchell 1988, 1990). We must analyze the state as such a structural effect. That is to say, we should examine it not as an actual structure, but as the powerful, apparently metaphysical effect of practices that make such structures appear to exist. In fact, the nation

state is arguably the paramount structural effect of the modern technical era. It includes within itself many of the particular institutions already discussed, such as armies, schools, and bureaucracies. Beyond these, the larger presence of the state in several ways takes the form of a framework that appears to stand apart from the social world and provide an external structure. One characteristic of modern governmentality, for example, is the frontier. By establishing a territorial boundary to enclose a population and exercising absolute control over movement across it, governmental powers define and help constitute a national entity. Setting up and policing a frontier involves a variety of fairly modern social practices—continuous barbed-wire fencing, passports, immigration laws, inspections, currency control, and so on. These mundane arrangements, most of them unknown two hundred or even one hundred years ago, help manufacture an almost transcendental entity, the nation-state. This entity comes to seem something much more than the sum of the everyday powers of government that constitute it, appearing as a structure containing and giving order and meaning to people's lives. An analogous example is the law. Once again, one could analyze how the mundane details of the legal process, all of which are particular social practices, are arranged to produce the effect that the law exists as a formal framework, superimposed above social practice. What we call the state, and think of as an intrinsic object existing apart from society, is the sum of these structural effects.

What is the relationship of this structural effect to the specifically capitalist nature of modernity? The state-centric theorists examined earlier argue that no particular relationship exists. To insist on the autonomy of the state, as they do, means that the programs it follows and the functions it serves should not be explained by reference even to the long-term requirements of the larger capitalist order, but primarily in terms of the independent ideas and interests of those who happen to hold high office. As we saw, however, the evidence they present fails to support this view and provides stronger support for neo-Marxist theories of the state, such as the work of Nicos Poulantzas. The state policies that Krasner describes in relation to the control of foreign raw materials or that Skocpol describes in her work on the New Deal (Skocpol 1981; see Mitchell 1991: 88–89) appear to serve the general requirements of capital. The relative separation of the state enables it to pursue the long-term interests of capital as a whole, sometimes working against the short-term interests of particular capitalists (see Cammack 1990). Yet, as Poulantzas himself recognized in his later work, this functionalist account cannot adequately explain the modern state. It does not account for the particular form taken by the modern state, as an aspect of the regulation of capitalist modernity. It does not explain how state power takes on the form of a seemingly external structure, or its association with an abstract system of law, or its apparent separation from, yet imbrication in, the sphere we call the economy. In other words, it does not tell us how the modern effect of the state is produced. There are two ways to approach this question of the relationship between capitalism and the state effect. One way is to explain the effect of the state as the consequence of capitalist production. The structural forms of the modern state

could be explained by reference to certain distinctive features of the way in which the social relations of production are organized under capitalism (see Ollman 1992). This is the approach taken by Poulantzas in his later work, in which he responded to and was influenced by Foucault. Poulantzas (1978) argues that what Foucault (1977) describes as discipline—processes of individualization, the modern production of knowledge, and the reorganization of space and time—should be explained as aspects of the way capitalism organizes the relations of production. These same processes, he suggests, account for the form taken by the state. The discipline of factory production, for example, introduces the separation of mental labor from manual labor. The state embodies this same separation, representing a distinct mental order of expertise, scientific management, and administrative knowledge. Similarly, in Poulantzas's view, the serial, cellular organization of time and space in modern production processes is reproduced in the new geospatial power of the nation-state and the historical-spatial definition of national identity.

The other approach to the question of the state and capital is the one taken here. Rather than explain the form of the state as the consequence of the disciplinary regime of capitalist production, one can see both the factory regime and the power of the state as aspects of the modern reordering of space, time, and personhood and the production of the new effects of abstraction and subjectivity. It is customary to see the state as an apparatus of power and the factory as one of production. In fact, both are systems of disciplinary power and both are techniques of production. Both produce the effect of an abstraction that stands apart from material reality. In the case of political practice, as we have seen, this abstraction is the effect of the state—a nonmaterial totality that seems to exist apart from the material world of society. In the case of the organization of labor, the abstraction produced is that of capital. What distinguishes capitalist production, after all, is not just the disciplined organization of the labor process but the manufacture of an apparent abstraction—exchange value—that seems to exist apart from the mundane objects and processes from which it is created. The effect of capital is produced out of techniques of discipline, organization, and enframing analogous to those that produce the effect of the state.

Rather than deriving the forms of the state from the logic of capital accumulation and the organization of production relations, both capital and the state can been seen as aspects of a common process of abstraction. This approach to the question of the relation between the state and capital enables one, furthermore, to extend the critique of the concept of the state to include the parallel concept of the economy.

Inventing the Economy

Modern mass armies, bureaucracies, and education systems were creations largely of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Complex legal codes and institutions and the modern control of frontiers and population movement

emerged mostly in the same period. The twentieth century was characterized by a further and different development: the emergence of the modern idea of the economy. Foucault, as we saw, placed the separation of the economy as its own sphere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as part of the emergence of the new techniques of government centered on the problem of population. This conflation of economy and population as political objects locates the emergence of the economy much earlier than it actually occurred. More important, it overlooks a critical shift that took place in the first half of the twentieth century, when the economy replaced population as the new object of the powers of government and the sciences of politics. This object played a central role in the articulation of the distinctive forms of the twentieth-century state as a set of bureaucratized science-based technologies of planning and social welfare. An adequate theory of the contemporary state must take into account not only the nineteenth-century developments described above but also the new relationship that emerged between state and economy in the twentieth century. The contemporary structural effect of the state is inseparable from the relatively recent creation of "the economy."

The nineteenth-century tactics of power that Foucault describes as government took as their fundamental object, as was noted, the issue of population. Politics was concerned with the security and well-being of a population defined in relation to a given territory and resources, with the pattern of its growth or decline, with associated changes in agriculture and commerce, and with its health, its education, and above all its wealth. The political economy of Smith, Ricardo, and Malthus developed within this general problematic of population and its prosperity. The term *political economy* referred to the proper economy, or management, of the polity, a management whose purpose was to improve the wealth and security of the population. The term *economy* never carried, in the discourse of nineteenth-century political economy, its contemporary meaning referring to a distinct sphere of social reality—understood as the self-contained totality of relations of production, distribution, and consumption within a defined geospatial unit. Nor was there any other term denoting such a separate, self-contained sphere (Mitchell 1995).

Marx followed in the same tradition. "When we consider a given country politico-economically," he wrote, "we begin with its population, its distribution among classes, town, country, the coast, the different branches of production, export and import, annual production and consumption, commodity prices, etc." (1973: 100). He argued that this conventional approach was backward, for population presupposes capital, wage labor, and division into classes. Smith and Ricardo had developed a system that started from these simpler abstractions, but one-sidedly focusing on landed property and on exchange. A proper analysis, Marx argued, should start with capital and material production and then work back toward the totalities of bourgeois society, its concentration in the form of the state, the population, the colonies, and emigration (100–8). The concept of material production has subsequently been misinterpreted as meaning the same thing as the twentieth-century idea of the economy. But Marx had no greater conception of an economy as a separate social sphere than the political economists whom he criticized.

The economy was invented in the first half of the twentieth century, as part of the reconstruction of the effect of the state. The nineteenth-century understanding of the production and circulation of wealth and its relation to population growth, territorial expansion, and resources broke down during World War I and the decade of financial and political crises that followed. The abandoning of gold as the measure of the value of money, unprecedented levels of debt, unemployment and overproduction, rapid swings from economic boom to complete collapse, the ending of European territorial expansion and population growth, the beginning of the disintegration of empire, and the very fear of capitalism's collapse all created a need to reimagine the process of government and construct new objects and methods of political power. It is in this period that terms such as "economic system," "economic structure," and finally "the economy" came into political circulation.

Between the 1920s and the 1950s, "the economy" came to refer to the structure or totality of relations of production, circulation, and consumption within a given geographical space. The emergence of macroeconomics, as the new science of this object was called, coincided with developments in statistics that made it possible to imagine the enumeration of what came to be known as the gross national product of an economy and with the invention of econometrics, the attempt to represent the entire workings of an economy as a single mathematical model (Mitchell 1995). The isolating of production, circulation, and consumption as distinctively economic processes was nothing new. This had been done, within the problematic of population, by the classical political economists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. What was new was the notion that the interrelation of these processes formed a space or object that was self-contained, subject to its own internal dynamics, and liable to "external" impulses or interventions that created reverberations throughout the self-contained object. Factors such as population, territory, and even other "economies" were now considered external to this object. But the most important thing imagined to stand outside the economy was the one considered most capable of affecting or altering it—the state.

The idea of an economy as a self-contained and internally dynamic totality, separate from other economies and subject to intervention, adjustment, and management by an externally situated state, could not have been imagined within the terms of nineteenth-century political economy. In the twentieth century, on the other hand, the contemporary concept of the state has become inseparable from the fundamental distinction that emerged between state and economy. In fact, much of the more recent theorizing about state and society is more accurately described as theorizing about the state in terms of its relation to the economy. Curiously, as the new distinction between state and economy emerged from the 1920s and 1930s onward, so-called economic processes and institutions became increasingly difficult to distinguish in practice from those of government or the state. With the collapse of the gold standard and the consolidation of cen-

tral banks and reserve systems, money came to acquire its value as part of a "political" as much as an "economic" process. State bureaucracies gradually became the economy's largest employer, spender, borrower, and saver. The creation of quasipublic corporations such as port authorities; the nationalization of transport, communications, and other services; the state subsidy of agriculture and of military and other manufacturing; even the growth of publicly owned corporations in place of private firms, and especially (as the Aramco case illustrates) the transnational corporations, all blurred the distinction between private and public spheres or state and economy.

As with state and society, so with state and economy, one has to ask why the distinction between these two objects seems so obvious and is taken for granted so routinely, when on close examination their separation is difficult to discern. The answer has to address the same effects of structure already discussed in relation to state and society. One examines the practical arrangements that make the economy appear a concrete, material realm and the state an abstract, institutional structure standing apart from the economy's materiality. Besides the methods of structuring already discussed, two structural effects are especially important to create the distinction between state and economy. First, when twentieth-century political practice invented the economy, the boundaries of this object were understood to coincide with those of the nation-state. Although the new macroeconomics did not theorize the nation-state, it represented the economy in terms of aggregates (employment, savings, investment, production) and synthetic averages (interest rate, price level, real wage, and so on) whose geospatial referent was always the nation-state (Radice 1984: 121). So, without explicit theorization, the state came to stand as the geospatial structure that provided the economy with its external boundary and form. Second, the economy was constructed as an object of knowledge in the twentieth century through an extensive process of statistical representation. Almost all of this process was carried out as part of the new institutional practice of the state. So the relationship between state and economy appeared to take the form of the relation between representor and the object of representation. (Once again, this relationship to the state was not something analyzed by the new science of economics. In fact, economics came to be distinguished among the social sciences by two related features: It was the only major social science with no subdiscipline—"field economics" it could be called—dealing with issues of data collection and questions of representation, and it was a discipline that became dependent on the state for almost all its data. The state thus appears to stand apart from the economy as a network of information, statistical knowledge, and imagery, opposed to the apparently real, material object to which this representational network refers. In practice, once again, this relationship is more complex, not least because the economy itself, in the course of the twentieth century, became more and more a hyperreal or representational object. Its elements came increasingly to consist of forms of finance, services, and so on that exist only as systems of representation; and the dynamics of the economy came to be determined increasingly

by factors such as expectations, that are themselves issues of representation. Nevertheless, the appearance of the economy as a real object in opposition to its representation by the state provided a simple means of effecting the seeming separation between state and economy that remains so important to most contemporary theories of the state.

In conclusion, the argument for a different approach to the question of the state and its relationship to society and economy can be summarized in a list of five propositions:

1. We should abandon the idea of the state as a freestanding entity, whether an agent, instrument, organization, or structure, located apart from and opposed to another entity called economy or society.
2. We must nevertheless take seriously the distinction between state and society or state and economy. It is a defining characteristic of the modern political order. The state cannot be dismissed as an abstraction or ideological construct and passed over in favor of more real, material realities. In fact, we must place this distinction between conceptual and material, between abstract and real, in historical question if we are to grasp how the modern state has appeared.
3. For the same reason, the prevailing view of the state as essentially a phenomenon of decision making or policy is inadequate. Its focus on one disembodied aspect of the state phenomenon assimilates the state-society and state-economy distinction to the same problematic opposition between conceptual and material.
4. We should address the state as an effect of mundane processes of spatial organization, temporal arrangement, functional specification, supervision and surveillance, and representation that create the appearance of a world fundamentally divided into state and society or state and economy. The essence of modern politics is not policies formed on one side of this division being applied to or shaped by the other, but the producing and reproducing of these lines of difference.
5. These processes create the effect of the state not only as an entity set apart from economy or society, but as a distinct dimension of structure, framework, codification, expertise, information, planning, and intentionality. The state appears as an abstraction in relation to the concreteness of the social, a sphere of representation in relation to the reality of the economic, and a subjective ideality in relation to the objectness of the material world. The distinctions between abstract and concrete, ideal and material, representation and reality, and subjective and objective, on which most political theorizing is built, are themselves partly constructed in those mundane social processes we recognize and name as the state.

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