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## *State Formation*



Historians, anthropologists, and sociologists have now begun to reconstitute the appropriate paradigm for studying “the State.” Although the relevance of the latter concept is still disputed, many idealists (such as Cassirer) and materialists (such as Engels or Lenin) have long defended the relevance of this focus as an essence, objective facticity, second-order phenomenon, spirit, cultural field, and so on, i.e., as *A Thing*. Marx attempts to disperse this essentialism-and-reification (Thingification), a procedure furthered by Mao and Gramsci. This recent work centers forms of social organization, particularly documentary organization, *as forms of rule and ruling*. Key questions then become NOT *who* rules but *how* is rule accomplished. This expanded conception of the political (opening to see the political features of all economic, cultural, and “private” relations) corresponds to a shift in dominant practices—within advanced capitalist societies, dependent capitalist formations, and socialist countries—where terms like “Governance” and “Entrepreneurialism” are now used extensively.

This refocusing of “How” questions as necessarily anterior to “Why” and “Who” or “Whom” questions, has oriented relevant studies toward a historical sociology of the type encouraged by Philip Abrams. It corresponds with quadruple challenges to, and crises of, legitimacy: socialist forms, feminist critiques, antiracist analyses, *and* within the governance of

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capitalist formations—plus the rediscovery of much of Marx “lost” (i.e., unknown) to those Second and Third Internationalists who formed “Marxism” as it was experienced in the 1960s and 1970s. The stress here crosses disciplinary boundaries (including political theory; plus anthropology, sociology, and history, as has been indicated) and transcends the “boundary maintenance” practices that detach subjectivity from culture, culture from power, power from knowledge, “the state” from subjectivities.

The argument (for such it is and remains) for *state formation* runs as follows: no historical or contemporary form of ruling can be understood (1) as or in its own discursive regime or image repertoire terms; (2) without investigating the historical genealogy, archaeology, origination (and transmutation) of those terms *as forms*; (3) without an awareness of “Abroad,” as in the “learning from ‘Abroad,’” which is so evident, both as positivity or as the negativity of the impositions of cultural-political imperatives (for example with regard to Aid or U.S. AID); and (4) in ways that *silence* the generic and racist features of “politically organized subjection” (Abrams [1977] 1988).

What a “state-formation” approach promises is a way of overcoming (for the region of its focus) the antinomies (of both Marxist and bourgeois scholarship) between Constraint and Consensus; Force and Will; Body and Mind; Society and Self. In sum: the objective and the subjective (Mao 1966). These are, so it is argued, the disciplined, powerful, acknowledged archetypes of rationalism and the Enlightenment. In other words, patriarchy, racism, and class-ism become visible as constitutive features of rule (both precapitalist and capitalist; developed and colonized capitalist; vanguard and reformist socialism). Governance becomes unified with the “private” realm; indeed, seen as constitutive of that crucial “private”/“public” split, and sexualized subjectivities (as part of the media of modernity) enter “politics.”

Centered here, finally, is the materiality of moral regulation and the moralization of material reality. What is natural, neutral, universal—that is, “The Obvious”—becomes problematic and questionable. Socializing Freud and Jung means psychologizing Marx (for example, Reich, among the most neglected political theorists of the twentieth century). Questions of “relevance” and “evidence” shift accordingly. Above all, these displaced and condensed realms of affectivity, bodily knowing, soulful aspirations, cultural symbologies, and personal associationism, come to be seen as sites/sights of maximally organized social forms (for the majority, that is, historical experiences of disempowerment, exploitation,

oppression, domination, and subordination). Here there is a "happy isomorphism" ("elective affinity"?) with the work of distinctively *social* linguists, joining with them in the exposure and explication of ruling powers, hence State powers, as a social grammar. Rediscovered, but in a different place, is *the grammar of politics*.