CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL CONCEPTS

A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

Georgina Blakeley and Valerie Bryson

Political concepts

Concepts are to the student of Politics what maps and compasses are to navigators: they are the tools of the trade which, if well designed, understood and applied, can guide us through the political world around us. Good concepts facilitate description, comprehension and explanation; without them we cannot even describe political phenomena, let alone progress towards their comprehension or explanation. If they are used constructively and analytically, political concepts can help us not only to interpret the world, but also, as Marx would have advocated, to change it. However, concepts can also at times mislead us: they can disguise more than they reveal, and lead us in directions we would not have chosen had we thought more clearly. This means that a key task for political theorists and scientists is to critically examine concepts and explore their logic and implications rather than accepting them at face value; it may also be relevant to ask who has designed them, and why.

Political concepts can be understood as particularly succinct ways of expressing general ideas. As such, they frequently encapsulate a range of complex and contested theories and approaches. For example, the concepts of 'democracy' and 'separation of powers' are both often used to discuss empirical evidence about the ways in which political power is organised in any given country; at the same time, however, they encapsulate more abstract theories about the ways in which political power can be organised and they contain normative arguments about how this *should* be arranged.

The more concepts are clearly defined and well understood, the more generally they can be applied in a variety of contexts and in a

variety of ways, or in Sartori's terms the more they can 'travel', whilst avoiding the distortion in their meaning which Sartori graphically described as 'conceptual stretching' (1970). Some concepts, however, appear to escape clear definition and comprehension. Concepts like 'democracy', 'power', even 'politics' itself, will always appear to be more coherent and understandable in the abstract than when applied to the rather messy reality around us. Such concepts are what have been termed 'essentially contested' concepts, that is to say, multi-faceted concepts whose definition is neither neutral nor settled, but rather shifts according to each theorist's ideological and normative views (Gallie 1955/56). Many theorists would place the concepts dealt with in this volume into this category of essentially contested concepts, given the many interpretations to which they have been subjected and the controversies which they have produced.

Nevertheless, to accept that concepts can be 'essentially contested' should not imply that we simply abandon any attempt to define and understand them, nor should we accept that all definitions are equally valid; whilst there may be no right or wrong definition, some definitions will still be better than others. Moreover, we should not ignore what may sometimes lie behind this idea of 'essentially contested' concepts, namely, that what we regard as definitional disputes may in fact be a smokescreen for normative and ideological disagreements.

This point is pertinent to the concepts in this volume, all of which have widespread currency in both academic and more general political debate. Whilst there are disagreements concerning their meaning, it is also often the case that these disagreements serve to obfuscate what are deeper ideological and normative disagreements about the extent to which we think that the phenomena described and explained by the concepts are either desirable or practical.

Political concepts today

Some of the political concepts we use today, such as democracy, are as old as political thought itself. However, some are much more recent, whilst others have only recently regained currency after years of neglect. The concepts examined in this volume have been selected because they seem to represent a distinct moment or mood amongst political theorists and commentators in the west, who are responding to a particular set of political and ideological circumstances. In this sense, the concepts can be seen as linked responses

to the dramatic changes that characterised the closing decades of the twentieth century. The collapse of so-called communist states in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, concurrent pressures on the 'overloaded' states in the west, and a trend in western philosophy which questions 'modern' belief systems in general and Marxism in particular have combined to undermine many of the key assumptions and certainties that underpinned 'progressive' western thought for most of the twentieth century. The collapse of faith in Marxism as either an explanatory tool or a strategic course of action and a general 'retreat from class' in political thought (for an early critical discussion of this, see Wood 1986) left a conceptual vacuum for those who still hoped to understand society with a view to changing it for the better. The concepts discussed in this volume have seemed to some to provide a way forward. As such, they form part of a common endeavour by many who wish to deepen and extend liberal democracy to provide a more genuinely inclusive society, whilst trying to learn the lessons from the collapse of Soviet communism and the contradictions of the bureaucratic welfare state in advanced capitalist societies in the west.

In this endeavour, many of those traditionally on the left of the political spectrum have both abandoned the Marxist discourse of class, capitalism, exploitation and oppression and taken on board many classical liberal preoccupations, in order to correct past inattention to the diversity and plurality of interests within civil society on the one hand, and the need to check and hold accountable state power on the other. In doing so, many have looked to new ideas and concepts, or sometimes the revival of old concepts, to provide a 'Third Way' between the rather sterile conclusion that nothing short of a revolutionary transformation will suffice, and the belief that contemporary western societies are 'as good as it gets'. For such theorists and political commentators, the dusting down of long-forgotten concepts such as civil society or citizenship, the development of new concepts like globalisation, stakeholder, empowerment or governance, or the recognition of social interests based on gender and ethnicity can both enhance our understanding of contemporary processes and offer the ability to 'reconcile the irreconcilable'[1] by revealing the potential for progressive and emancipatory change *within* existing societies and structures.

1. According to Marx, this was what the liberal theory of his contemporary John Stuart Mill tried and failed to do (1970:16).

Although the concepts and approaches discussed in this volume can be seen as the interlinked products of underlying trends, they certainly do not constitute a neat package of ideas and they have not been uniformly welcomed. In addition to their popular currency amongst politicians and policy makers, each has generated its own body of specialist literature, some of which is critical of recent developments. In particular, there is concern amongst commentators on the left that, partly because many of the newly popular concepts are rooted in liberal rather than democratic or socialist thought, they may act as a smokescreen for continued exploitation and oppression. This may mean that, rather than contributing to our understanding and the development of progressive change, they provide a distorted picture of the world that legitimises the inequalities of the free market capitalist economy. Another way of putting this is to say that the concepts may be ideological in a Marxist sense: that is, they provide a picture of the world which, although it has a basis in reality, at the same time represents a distortion of this reality, a partial view which serves the interests of powerful groups and makes it difficult to imagine alternatives. If so, rather than contributing to our understanding and helping us to develop effective strategies for improving society, the concepts would provide only a skewed and limited perspective that allows no space for the discussion of radical change.

Although all the concepts have generated similar concerns, each has generally been discussed separately from the others, and there has been little attempt or opportunity to assess the new developments in political thinking as a whole. This volume, which is the product of a conference hosted by the Politics Department of the University of Huddersfield in November 1999, seeks to change this. It brings together the findings of academics and practitioners with specialist knowledge of key concepts and approaches who have a common interest in contributing to a wider debate and developing a shared critical response to current trends.

The chapters

Despite their common background, the concepts and approaches discussed in this volume also have very different histories, and draw on a wide range of methodologies, epistemological foundations and disciplines. Contributors were therefore asked to identify these and to make their analysis accessible to generalists as well as to fellow

specialists. At the same time, they were asked to consider the extent to which their chosen concept helps us to understand contemporary society and set realistic emancipatory goals, and whether it supersedes, complements or duplicates approaches based on the analysis of capitalism and class.

The result is a book which is significantly more than the sum of its parts. Although each chapter was written separately and contributors certainly do not adhere to any 'party line', a number of key themes have clearly emerged. At the most general level, there is a sense that most of the concepts can be helpful, but that they must be handled with extreme care if they are not to be used by conservative interests to legitimise policies and outcomes that are inherently oppressive. This danger arises if the concepts are abstracted from the analysis of the political economy of capitalism and we lose sight of capitalism's central imperative: that is, to pursue profit and maximise the extraction of surplus value from workers. As Wood has argued, in the long run this imperative means that 'Not only welfare provision but decent pay and working conditions and even environmental protection are, it seems, obstacles to competitiveness, profitablity and growth' (1995:285).

Globalisation, governance and postmodernism

The first three chapters, on globalisation, governance and postmodernism, introduce overarching concepts which are referred to in many later chapters. As Graham Harrison shows, the orthodox notion of *globalisation* provides an ideological justification of that which it purports to describe, and the concept both argues for certain political viewpoints and limits our ability to conceptualise alternatives. As such, it asserts not only the existence and inevitability, but also the desirability, of an increasingly integrated and deregulated global economy in which national boundaries are becoming insignificant and nation states can have little power to control the forces of global capital. Harrison argues that this view both exaggerates what is happening, particularly the alleged loss of power of nation states, and glosses over the inevitably damaging effects of intensified international competition both on the environment and on the majority of the world's population, for whom globalisation is a story not of success, but of 'unemployment, malnutrition, poverty or extreme uncertainty about the future' (see page 23).

However, Harrison does not argue that the concept of globalisation should be abandoned. Instead, he shows that if we engage

critically with the processes of globalisation, we can see that the United States does not provide the only possible model for capitalism, and we can identify opportunities for resistance and struggle through new forms of democracy and civil society. Even more radically, he concludes with a salutary reminder that, despite the claims of orthodox globalisation theory, the globalised capitalist economy is neither 'footloose' nor 'disembedded', but remains dependent upon workers to produce a surplus. This dependency, which lies at the heart of global capitalism, means that it is not untouchable and that, as labour too begins to organise globally, there is potential for radical transformation.

In his discussion of the now fashionable concept of *governance*, Andrew Taylor argues that, like globalisation, this is not a neutral description of an inevitable process. Rather, it provides an ideological justification of the neo-liberal state which exaggerates both the extent and inevitability of recent trends. Along with bodies such as the IMF and World Bank, recent theorists of governance have argued that globalisation and increased social complexity have required a shift from interventionist government to hands-off governance, conceptualised as a shift in the role of the state from rowing to steering, and a hollowing out of the state's core capacities. Taylor, however, rejects the claim that the power of the nation state has been reduced. He argues that the need for enhanced strategic planning (steering) has in fact increased the influence of the state's core executive, and that, far from being inactive, the state remains central to the capitalist political economy, particularly by its role in mediating between the competing interests of different fractions of capital and managing the tensions caused by globalisation.

For Taylor, therefore, the concept of governance is a red herring that disguises the fact that the role of the state remains essentially that identified by Marx: that is, to secure the best long-term conditions for capital accumulation. Far from identifying important new trends, he argues that there is little to be gained from treating governance as qualitatively different from government, concluding that 'At best it represents the repackaging of pluralism, at worst reinventing the wheel' (see page 50).

Stephen Brown's chapter on *postmodernism* is at first sight very different, and quite remote from any practical political concerns. However, the influence of postmodernism extends well beyond philosophy departments, and has clear political consequences. Although he believes that postmodernism can offer some useful

insights, Brown argues that the overall effect of the concept is to obscure our understanding of contemporary society and work against attempts to produce comprehensive change.

As Brown shows, postmodernism not only rejects the 'grand narrative' of Marxism, with its belief in the importance of class and progress towards a free and equal communist society, it also sweeps aside modern Enlightenment assumptions about human reason, progress, the individual and the existence of objective truth: assumptions that underpin liberal thought. These assumptions are replaced by an insistence on the essential incoherence, precariousness and fragmentation of ideas, social formations and even the individual self, and the possibility of objective knowledge and truth is denied. Along with some other contributors to this volume, Brown finds positive and radical elements in postmodernism's critique of modern thought. However, again like other contributors, he also finds fault with its failure to analyse the economic and social contexts within which individuals, ideas and knowledge are constructed. He also rejects its refusal to acknowledge that oppression and injustice can be more than linguistic constructions, or to conceptualise a potential for political action beyond the local, fragmentary and ephemeral. This refusal, Brown argues, means that postmodernism cannot provide a genuinely radical critique of contemporary society; indeed it too may serve an ideological function by obscuring its systematically negative effects.

Citizenship and civil society

While the concepts of globalisation and governance both claim to describe key developments at the turn of the millennium, and postmodernism rejects the assumptions that have until recently underpinned western political thought, the concepts of citizenship and civil society both represent an attempt to give new currency to ideas that were developed in much earlier periods. In his chapter, Keith Faulks argues that the concept of *citizenship* can provide the basis for an emancipatory politics that is both inclusive and egalitarian. However, he argues that this potential can only be realised if we go beyond the liberal assumptions of modern citizenship, which prioritise individuals over the community, prefer market freedoms to substantive equality, social rights or democratic participation and support exclusive, state-based notions of citizenship.

Faulks argues that, although by the mid twentieth century the claims of citizenship appeared to have modified the inequalities of

capitalism, today the assertion of the political and social rights of citizenship seems to be in conflict with dominant neo-liberal principles, which favour individualism and the rolling back of the state. Drawing on communitarian, green, socialist and feminist arguments, he calls for a reconceptualisation of citizenship which treats its component parts as complementary. Structuring his argument around contemporary debates over rights, responsibilities, resources, recognition and residence, he argues that individual rights must be balanced with responsibilities to the environment as well as to humanity, and that the exercise of democratic rights and responsibilities requires resources that cannot be guaranteed by the free market, which is inherently unstable. Given this tension between the values and organising principles of citizenship and the free market, Faulks argues that the social rights and responsibilities of citizenship must be prioritised and detached from individuals' roles as workers and consumers; to this end, he supports calls for a 'citizens' income'. He also explores the implications of globalisation and, much like Harrison in Chapter 1, he sees the possible emergence of a global civil society that transcends the liberal state-based model and that contains the potential for genuinely participatory and cosmopolitan citizenship.

Georgina Blakeley's first chapter focuses on the concept of *civil society*, which analyses that sphere of life between the state and the private realm of the family where citizens can exercise their rights and responsibilities. Much like Faulks, she argues that her concept can enhance our understanding of society and the possibilities of change, but only if it is disentangled from liberal assumptions and combined with an analysis of its socio-economic context. She argues that there is a normative ambiguity at the heart of civil society, which encapsulates both democratic and liberal norms and contains a tension between individualistic and self-interested notions of rights and freedom from state intervention and more collectivist ideas of communal responsibilities and the general good. This means that the concept can be used progressively to challenge authoritarian regimes and by groups in western democracies seeking to deepen and expand democratic processes, but that it can also be used by elite groups in liberal democracies seeking to restrict the use of the state and to ignore underlying socio-economic inequalities.

Blakeley rejects the liberal view of civil society as a site of diversity and plurality where equal citizens negotiate and associate at will and in which capitalism is just one set of relations amongst many.

Echoing points raised in Brown's chapter on postmodernism, she argues that the stress on plurality and fragmentation in much of the recent civil society literature obscures our understanding of underlying processes. Instead, she argues that civil society has to be understood as a site of struggle, in which the unequal power relations of capitalist class society are expressed, reproduced and contested and through which public/private boundaries can be critically examined. She concludes that the concept can be empowering, and that its potential for linking normative values with empirical research provides a useful analytical tool, but only if civil society's relationship with the state, the market and other forms of inequalities is also examined.

Gender and 'ethnicity'

The next two chapters examine attempts to conceptualise social formations other than class. However, they reiterate Blakeley's argument that meaningful analysis cannot be abstracted from its socio-economic context and they stress that gender and ethnicity interact both with each other and also with class.

In her chapter on *gender*, Valerie Bryson welcomes the increased attention that has been paid to gender issues, without which any attempt to understand society or achieve meaningful change would be severely limited. She argues that the distinction which many feminists have made between sex and gender can still be empowering, and agrees that this can usefully be extended to the analysis of masculinities. Like Brown in Chapter 3, she also finds that postmodernism can offer some insights, particularly in its analyses of the fluidity and diversity of gender and gender experience.

However, Bryson rejects postmodernism's stress on individualistic, psychosexual and cultural solutions and its inability to address the material and collective experience of oppression. She also warns against discussions of masculinity that obscure both the continuing reality of male power and privilege and the extent to which problems faced by men are linked to class and ethnicity. More generally, she argues that a narrow focus on gender fails to see that, because gender interacts with other dimensions of inequality, it cannot be understood or challenged in isolation. Bryson also claims that attempts to challenge traditional gender roles and inequalities are unlikely to be successful within an unregulated free market economy. This means that, although the analysis of gender is necessary if we are to understand society and the potential for eman-

cipatory change, this must complement the analyses of class and ethnicity rather than substituting for them. Failure to understand this means that the concept can serve the ideological function of disguising power structures, and thus serve not only as an apology for capitalism, but as an apology for racism and patriarchy as well.

Amrit and Kalpana Wilson see the concept of *'ethnicity'* as even more problematic. They argue that from its origins in the eras of slavery and colonialism 'ethnicity' has been inextricably linked to racism, and that its meaning has evolved in response to the changing needs of capitalism. However, contemporary analysis and debate, dominated by the ethnic studies and postmodern schools, ignores this political and economic context, focussing instead on culture as a key marker of 'ethnicity'. This means that both racism and the economic disadvantages faced by groups or nations are explained away as a result of cultural differences and that the role that 'race' and racism play in determining material aspects of people's day-to-day lives is ignored. The result is to legitimise the racial stereotyping that feeds into the policies of western democracies. These direct domestic policies towards supposed cultural communities without recognising either the exploitative relationships that may exist within these communities or the ways in which culture is constantly shaped and reshaped by class, 'race' and gender relations and by the state itself. In recent years, culture has become increasingly equated with religion, and the portrayal of Islam as the global enemy of 'civilisation' distracts attention from the real structures and relations of power both globally and locally.

Wilson and Wilson argue that the stress on culture in both the ethnic studies and postmodern schools serves the interests of capital by obscuring its effects, dividing oppressed groups and depoliticising issues around 'race'. While they concede that postmodernism can help analyse experience, they agree with Brown in Chapter 3 that the approach rules out a coherent strategy or vision for change. Instead, they argue for a politicised view of 'ethnicity' as a construct which is shaped by changing social, economic and political forces.

The Third Way, empowerment, stakeholding and social capital

The final set of concepts all claim to provide positive ways forward that will benefit all sections of society. The concept of the *Third Way*, discussed by Brendan Evans, provides a general framework for these approaches and has been highly influential on centre-left parties and governments, particularly in the United States and Britain. Although

partly a pragmatic response to electoral defeat, it also represents a more sustained and transnational response by those attempting to retain progressive policies at the same time as responding to the perceived economic imperatives of an increasingly globalised and internationally competitive economy, in which the power of nation states is severely restricted.

Seeking to move forward from what they see as an obsolete left–right spectrum, Third Way proponents claim to reconcile neo-liberal ideas on the free market economy, personal responsibility and low taxation with progressive demands for social justice and security. However, by prioritising the needs of business, Third Way economic strategy leads to a shift from the welfare state to a competitive state in which the purpose of welfare provision is to promote economic growth rather than to redistribute resources.

Although he finds positive elements in Third Way thinking, Evans argues that it overstates the impact of globalisation and the lack of political alternatives, and that it can provide no vision for the future. Much like Harrison and Taylor in Chapters 1 and 2, he argues that governments have more leeway than Third Way proponents suggest, and that their rejection of more radical policies represents an unnecessary capitulation to business interests rather than objective necessity. He also refuses to accept that the Third Way represents any kind of final stage in political thinking and dismisses as naive the notion that it can supersede class analysis, which it can at best complement.

Central to the Third Way arguments is a stress on personal responsibility and opportunity rather than state provision, which ties in clearly with the concepts of empowerment, stakeholding and social capital. As Hannah Cooke says in her chapter on *empowerment*, at one level it is difficult to be against this concept, which has a progressive and positive feel and draws heavily on radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. However in practice, she argues, empowerment is more about feeling powerful than being powerful. Although the effect of empowerment programmes has been to devolve *responsibilities* to individual workers and users of state services, *power* is increasingly centralised, and such programmes have been used both to undermine collectivism in the workplace and to reduce demands on the state. Far from furthering progressive policies, the concept serves the needs of capitalism at a time of job insecurity and neo-liberal demands for a reduction in state expenditure, by portraying these as increases in personal choice and

responsibility; from this perspective, today's workforce responds to the opportunities and challenges of flexible working, and individual citizens are enabled to take more responsibility for their own health and financial security.

As Cooke shows, empowerment interprets the potentially radical language of freedom and responsibility in individualistic terms which, far from questioning the inequalities and exploitation inherent in the free market economy, takes capitalism as the natural order of things. As such, the concept represents a colonisation of the language of opposition by neo-liberal elites which obscures the realities of power and militates against collective action for change.

The concept of *stakeholding*, discussed by Adrian Budd, at first sight appears much more radical. Although it draws on some of the rhetoric of empowerment, it challenges rather than endorses neo-liberal trends and market-driven versions of capitalism and has been used to argue against the erosion of welfare state provision and for income redistribution in favour of the poor. However, Budd argues that the continental European and Japanese tradition of managed capitalism from which stakeholding emerged can only be successful at times of capitalist growth. At times of recession, stakeholding rhetoric about social partnership cannot protect workers; hence both the recent retreat from meaningful stakeholding policies in nations where they had seemed strong and the abandonment of the concept's radical elements in Britain, where its currency is more recent.

In contrast to Evans' view that states have a significant amount of choice in the policies they pursue, Budd argues that their options are severely limited by the need to secure the optimum conditions for the long-term accumulation of capital. Because stakeholding does not address the nature of capital–labour relations, that is, the underlying reality that capitalism requires the exploitative extraction of surplus value from the workforce, it fails to see that any inclusion of labour as a social partner has to be on capitalism's terms. In this context, far from providing a secure foundation for progress, stakeholding can disguise what is really happening and legitimise exploitation. For real change, Budd argues, we must look beyond the narrow horizons of the competitive, capitalist economy and base our politics upon a recognition that the interests of labour and capital are essentially opposed.

The concept of *social capital*, discussed by Georgina Blakeley in the final chapter, is a suitable one to end with because it is both the newest concept and one which makes explicit many of the themes

identified in earlier chapters. Increasingly replacing the concept of civil society, social capital refers to the structural and cultural aspects of society said to facilitate the positive actions and forms of co-operation that enhance its general social, economic and political well-being. In line with theories of good governance and Third Way ideas on rolling back the state, social capital theory looks to society rather than governments to generate these resources.

Although the concept seems new, Blakeley argues that, like many of the concepts discussed in this volume, it is largely a contemporary reworking of classical liberal and pluralist theory and is vulnerable to the same criticisms. Because it neglects the structured inequalities of class and gender and treats social capital as the cause rather than the product of its environment, the concept addresses the symptoms of social problems rather than their causes, and displaces responsibility from states to citizens. This is particularly clear in the World Bank's social capital initiatives in the Third World. Much as empowerment promises power and choice but delivers this only to elites, and stakeholding promises social partnership but only on capital's terms, so social capital theory ignores the underlying exploitation inherent in capital–labour relations. Like other concepts discussed in this volume, this means that social capital provides an ideological service to capitalism by disguising its operations. However, whilst most of the other concepts can also lay claim to a more radical heritage that might have emancipatory potential, social capital's liberal assumptions are unambiguous, placing it securely in the camp of the new right.

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1
Globalisation

Graham Harrison

This chapter critically evaluates different understandings of the term 'globalisation'. It does so from a Marxist-inspired viewpoint that leads it to identify significant power relations driving images of globalisation. In this sense, globalisation can be seen as an ideology. The chapter begins by outlining the orthodox view of globalisation, as an ineluctable process of market expansion. Subsequently, we look at research that challenges this orthodoxy before considering the arguments made in the name of globalisation. After a brief look at pro-globalisation arguments, critiques of globalisation are reviewed and presented as counter-orthodoxies. This leads us to look at different political approaches to globalisation, based in notions of reconfiguring – but not abolishing – globalisation in general terms. The chapter ends with a consideration of prospects for a more profound global transformation than that envisaged by the previous critiques and ideologies.

> Globalisation is a phenomenon that we cannot deny. All we can do is accept it. (Nelson Mandela)

> Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier [to] ... conquer the whole earth for its market. (Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*)

As is suggested by the two quotations above, this chapter will investigate how the concept of globalisation has been used to *argue* certain political viewpoints. As such, we take globalisation as a contested

phenomenon which does not have to follow faithfully any 'actually existing' process of globalisation, although we will come to relate *concepts* to *processes* of globalisation in later sections. The aim is to critically review the way globalisation has been used to throw light on contemporary politics and to assess whether this illumination advances our understanding in ways other 'older concepts' could not.

A history of 'globalisation': the establishment of an orthodoxy

The notion of globalisation is a child of the 1990s. Perhaps the most influential early usage of the term is Ohmae's *The Borderless World* (1990). Ohmae sets out an image of globalisation in which:

- the world economy has become qualitatively more integrated
- large amounts of economic activity take no (or very little) account of national boundaries
- the nation state's power is in decline or perhaps becoming defunct as a result of powerful global economic forces.

Although this point of view has been criticised by a number of subsequent researchers, the image of globalisation presented above has endured remarkably, to the extent that the associations listed above are implicitly embedded in the words of politicians and most of the broadsheet newspapers, as well as the words of businessmen and women when they meet in plush hotels to share their world view. Let us add a little more detail to this globalisation orthodoxy which emerged with such vigour in the 1990s and remains with us today.

Technology

The application of new technologies has 'shrunk' the world. Satellite communications and the internet are especially salient, although one might also mention rapid courier services or the massive increase in aeroplane traffic. Writing about the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the times) of the 1990s, John Naughton states that 'the globalisation of markets and of work brought about by information technology... enables someone in Calcutta to process your airline reservation as easily as the travel agent around the corner' (*Guardian*, 31 December 1995).

Global finance

The rise of global trade in shares, currencies and futures (essentially a form of betting on future transactions) has created flows of value in the trillions across the globe. Events such as 'Black Wednesday' in the United Kingdom in 1992, when the Chancellor had to admit that the Government could not control the price of sterling in the face of heavy speculation, have led commentators to see global finance as the key agency undermining state power. Furthermore, most global financial activity takes place in London, Tokyo and New York, following the sun and creating a 24-hour market. This makes 'old time' and 'national time' insignificant as trade takes place simultaneously and constantly across the globe.

The Washington Consensus

There is an ideological aspect to the process of globalisation as set out above. Globalisation is an expression of the rise of the 'common sense' of the free market, or of neo-liberalism (Gill 1995). This ideology sees globalisation as the welcome historical ascendance of the laissez-faire model: global markets are (or should be) free markets; states should not try to encumber global capital movements; increasingly intense global trade will improve efficiency and general levels of well-being, and so on. A key institutional source of these ideas is the IMF–Wall Street–Treasury complex (Gowan 1999). This is why the notion of a global(ising) ideology of the free market has often been called the Washington Consensus.

In summary, the orthodox concept of globalisation is that given (but not accepted) by Hutton:

> The fashionable consensus is that we are living in an era of globalisation, the information revolution, and earth-shattering change. The financial markets rule economic policy, nation states have little autonomy, and technology is transforming our lives. We have to embrace the market and new technology, or we are dead. (*Guardian*, 28 December 1995)

Key to this globalisation orthodoxy is the notion that the boundaries of a national economy or government have been undermined by international economic forces, even in regard to the most powerful states.

> As almost every factor of production ... moves across borders, the very idea of the American economy is becoming meaningless. (Reich 1992:9)

This orthodoxy has been establishing itself as a common sense with a popular resonance. People have a sense of 'great forces' outside of their – or their government's – control, bringing them images and commodities from remote parts of the world, but on terms which are neither clear nor theirs. So virile has been the colonisation of language (popular and elite) by globalisation that more critical writers speak of 'globaloney', that is, the meaningless repetition of 'global-speak' with little attention to what the term means (see Halliday 2001). Common sense can easily slip into tautology – 'we live in a globalised world ...' – and the images of globalisation become self-affirming and self-confirming.

Current usage: a contested globalisation

However, the concept of globalisation has had a fairly rough ride within academe. The orthodoxy has been challenged on both an economic and a political count, which we can only sketch here.

How globalised is the world economy?

Hirst and Thompson (1996) look at the history of global economic activity and at levels of direct foreign investment and trade as proportions of domestic economic activity and find that present-day proportions are not higher that they were before the First World War. It is certainly worth bearing in mind that global economic structures are hardly novel. The late 1800s saw heavy international investment, buoyed by imperialist rivalries. World systems theorists date the origins of the modern world system to the mercantilist trade networks established in the fourteenth century.

One might respond to this notion of a *longue durée* of globalisation (a history of centuries, not decades) by emphasising the innovations of contemporary globalisation, in order to stress the *qualitative* differences of the present day. But even so, the economy is not in any simple sense 'global'. Scholte (1997) makes this point when clarifying conceptual distinctions. He says that it is important to distinguish between the *international* and the *transnational* (global). International activity takes place across boundaries; transnational activity takes place *regardless* of boundaries. The image of

orthodox globalisation is that boundaries no longer matter, but a lot of international economic activity is based on the existence of boundaries. In other words, national boundaries matter to capital in its international strategies. For example, many transnational corporations still exhibit a strong national identity, producing a majority of commodities for a 'domestic market' and sharing close relations with the 'home' government. Their investment patterns may be less clearly 'footloose' than historically embedded in certain regions: notably Japan, the European Union and the United States, but perhaps also following old colonial or imperial links (Held and McGrew 1998:231; Nederveen Pieterse 1997).

In sum, we should not let some aspects of orthodox globalisation distract us from the uneven patterns of economic activity across the globe, nor the enduring national associations that transnational corporations might have.

Does globalisation spell the end of the nation state?

It is not self-evident that globalisation condemns the state to a role of passive spectator in the face of huge economic and social transactions undertaken mainly within cyberspace. Interestingly, if we take two of the most compelling examples of orthodox globalisation given so far, we find that states are far from irrelevant: cyberspace is a product of US military technology, and it remains that much of the technology of Silicon Valley in the US relies on US Government funding (the distinction between military and 'civilian' technology is all but defunct). The catastrophe of 'Black Wednesday' took on the proportions it did because of the actions of the Bank of England, at the time managed by the British Government (Martin and Schumann 1997:58 *et seq.*).

Conceptually, researchers have often argued that it is a question not so much of ushering the nation state off the historical stage as of investigating the way in which the state's role(s) is *changing* as a result of globalisation. There are a number of different points of view here.

Catalytic states

Linda Weiss argues that state planning is still important, because economies and transnationals benefit from the elaboration of governmental globalisation strategies. Weiss speaks of 'catalytic states', endeavouring to promote successful globalisation for 'their' companies or national economies (1998).

Competition states

Phil Cerny (2000) argues that, because of globalisation, states are becoming less centrally concerned with political sovereignty and security, and more concerned to succeed as actors in global markets in order to protect national economic well-being. As such, states are becoming more 'entrepreneurial'.

Differentiated states

Michael Mann (1997) argues that one can only understand the changing role of the state during globalisation if one makes distinctions *between* states. Clearly, the (re)actions of a powerful European state are going to be different from those of weak peripheral states in the ex-colonial world. States with thriving economies might become stronger, whilst states enduring protracted recession or low growth will be very weak. Some historically strong states may be losing sovereignty as a result of regional integration.

One can go further than the three models above. In opposition to orthodox globalisation, much of the work listed above gives the state agency, but it is also the case that the state is still reacting to a bigger, broader set of processes. Others have argued that the state is an agent actively promoting and shaping the pace and nature of globalisation. In other words, states are *authors* of globalisation. Pantich (1994) stresses the political construction of globalisation through trade agreements and regionalisation. Clark (1998) argues that states act as nodes of interaction between domestic and international politics, filtering information from these two spheres and acting, as states, on the basis of this filtering process. In other words, the notion of an end to the nation state is highly ideological and serves to entrench ideas about orthodox globalisation.

In sum, the interaction between states and globalisation is more complex than the 'end-of-the-state' image allows. States vary in the degree of their international power, and they can act as agents of globalisation as well as being passive victims of it.

Critical debate

We have understood globalisation as an argument, an attempt to create an ideological or political orthodoxy. Subsequently, we have seen how researchers have revised the orthodox globalisation concept to produce more complex and nuanced conceptualisations

of globalisation. As with the globalisation orthodoxy, these latter analyses are elaborated with their own arguments and political viewpoints. Let us therefore engage directly with the political debates and contests of globalisation.

The politics of orthodox globalisation

Orthodox globalisation is clearly neo-liberal. Its normative base is the celebration of the market. Globalisation is a triumph – not only over so-called global 'historic alternatives' (Fukuyama 1992), but also over unions and Keynesian states. Globalisation is the universalisation of Thatcher's authoritarian aphorism: 'There Is No Alternative'. The free market has won; there is no longer any significant oppositional space. To return to Marx's words at the start of the chapter, capitalism has conquered the whole earth for its market. For those who believe in the free market, there is much hubris: new levels of efficiency, new levels of trade, new technological innovations, international mergers and acquisitions, new forms of consumption, and so on. If there are any problems with globalisation (the now infamous financial instability from 1997 to 1999), the orthodox solution is *more globalisation*, that is, less regulation, fewer capital controls and so on (Higgot and Phillips 2000; Wade and Veneroso 1998a).

Orthodox globalisation paints a world where business is ascendant and states are fossilised. Little attention is paid to the repercussions for democracy of this state of affairs. The assumption is that democracy can work quite happily alongside the market, national or global: a liberal article of faith at least as strong today as it was at the turn of the last century.

> Among the consequences [of globalisation] is a one-sided depoliticising of the state as neo-liberalism becomes 'the only game in town', according to widely accepted perceptions that are dutifully disseminated by mainstream media to all corners of the planet. Such a neo-liberal mindset is deeply opposed to social public sector expenditures devoted to welfare, job creation, environmental protection, health care, education, and the alleviation of poverty. (Falk 1999:127)

Rejecting orthodoxy

Should we be won over by the persuasions of orthodox globalisation? Is the free market *the* global solution to humanity's

fundamental problems? Quite obviously not. Again, we can only sketch some of the principal arguments.

The market as opportunity or imperative?

Meiksins Wood's (1994) work has shown how the social relations of the market display forms of opportunity, although they were historically constructed on force and compulsion. This clearly remains the case during globalisation. In fact, the hidden compulsion within market opportunity is embedded in Hutton's words earlier: 'We have to embrace the market and new technology, *or we are dead*.' The fundamental form of compulsion imposed by globalisation is that of intensified competition. Especially in the peripheral national economies (which still contain most of humanity), the logic of globalisation is the logic of the bargain basement: 'invest here for fewer taxes on profit (Thomas 1997), fewer labour regulations, no environmental regulations, cheaper labour, larger subsidies ...'. Albo (1994) calls this 'competitive austerity', and Cerny (2000) calls it 'regulation arbitrage'. If workers organise to increase their rights in the workplace, companies and finance will – so the argument goes – leave the country for sunnier climes.

The end of politics?

Orthodox globalisation argues that much of what used to be defined as 'politics' is now dead or dying. The big ideological questions are no longer relevant. Even social democratic notions of the state as a vestige of popular welfare are all but buried, not only in the United Kingdom, but also in Scandinavia. Now, much of the attention paid to government concerns issues of technical economic management, especially the monetarist policies of Ministries of Finance and their effects on inflation. Here, 'globalisation' is a term used to obscure the political and ideological purpose behind neo-liberal reform, representing it as the inevitable consequences of a global process which cannot be controlled (Coates 1999). This is the import of Nelson Mandela's words at the beginning of this chapter. Furthermore, globalisation is painted as such a powerful and expansive process that people can neither understand nor react to the social processes that strongly shape their lives.

> Globalisation thus appears as the ultimate form of alienation: something created by people that has come to wield absolute power over them. (Cox 2000:33)

Thus, for anyone concerned with democracy, orthodox globalisation is extremely worrying. It argues, fatalistically (Gamble 2000: Chapter 3), that – whether we like it or not – notions of democratic accountability and influence are no longer appropriate beyond a very narrow agenda or personality preference and marginal differences in tax policy.

The world as a commodity?

If we were to be persuaded by the orthodox globalisation ideal, we would have to reconcile ourselves to the effects of an unencumbered market's effects on cultures and ecosystems. It is a matter of historical fact that the expansion of capitalism has produced extremely threatening environmental problems. The emission of greenhouse gases may be part and parcel of industrialisation, but it is capital (especially in America) which is pressuring states not to cut rates of emission or make the use of fossil fuels more expensive. Privately funded science tried to debunk the theory that CFCs created a widening 'hole' in the ozone layer. 'Dirty' industries relocate where environmental regulation is weakest, pouring toxic metals into South African rivers, or creating toxic clouds and rivers in the *Maquiladora* region of Mexico. If globalisation is seen as the expansion and deepening of capitalist social relations (Marcuse 2000:24), then these relations will voraciously transform the components of global ecosystems into commodities to yield value and profit. Global neo-liberalism is the intensified export of tropical hardwoods, the damming of rivers to create electricity plants (rarely for local people but more often for large extractive industries), the increasing production of cars and consumption of fossil fuels, and so on.

Globalisation, recession and crisis

An important theme developed in Marx's *Capital* is the instability of capitalism and its tendency to crisis. Again, globalisation seems to represent an aspect of Marx's analysis writ large. Globalisation has created new instabilities and crises. The movement of international finance – particularly hedge funds, which raise huge amounts of credit to speculate on currencies – has become so rapid and unpredictable that entire economies can rise or fall on the basis of only partially understandable (let alone predictable) changes in global markets. The collapse of the Thai baht in 1997 also led to a series of 'contagions' in south-east Asia and Russia and Mexico. The unprecedented divergence between the value of shares traded in Wall Street

and the levels of real output in the American economy yield grim predictions of future global financial crashes.

It is also extremely important to bear in mind that successful globalisation can be built on poverty, increasing inequality and unemployment (Halliday 2001; Thomas 1997). Global levels of inequality are extreme to the extent of being barely credible: the 358 richest people possess as much wealth as the 2,500,000,000 poorest people (Martin and Schumann 1997:23, 29). Globalisation is an *elite process*, driven by a small clique of transnational managers, intellectuals, bureaucrats and politicians (Sklair 1997). These people are the real 'citizens' of globalisation: routine air travel in first class, residence in 'international' standard hotels, work and leisure in the well-heeled parts of 'world cities', and so on. If 'globalisation' is experienced as unemployment, malnutrition, poverty or extreme uncertainty about the future by large swathes of the world's population, global citizens are indifferent to these experiences, as long as business is good. One can see this indifference to inequality in the geography of globalised space: a juxtaposition of wealth and poverty which is commonly policed by private 'security' companies. In the Philippines, peasants uprooted by flooding in 1995 were relocated in resettlement camps with practically no chance of escaping from extreme poverty. However:

> A few minutes walk away from the [resettlement camps] ... Holiday Inn has built a five-star hotel complete with a luxury golf course. It is a grotesque testament to the reality of globalisation, with grinding poverty brought face-to-face with corporate power. (Kevin Watkins, *Guardian*, 20 December 1995)

In sum, this section has outlined the ways in which globalisation is riven with contradictions and deleterious effects. This is because, in its essentials, globalisation is the intensification and expansion of capitalism. A Marxist critique of capitalism should argue that, for all the progress generated by the profit motive, capitalism creates immiseration, alienation and social costs ('externalities') which are only tolerable for apologists of capitalism.

Contesting globalisation

Does this mean that 'globalisation' as a concept is a smokescreen, merely a cover for 'more' capitalism? The answer here should be

negative. There is too much substantial social change which one can associate with even Scholte's more discerning definition of globalisation to allow us to reject the concept entirely, as Scholte himself reveals so clearly (2000). Capitalism is changing, as it must. It is therefore incumbent on critics of orthodox globalisation to contest the scope and nature of the process(es), to *engage* with globalisation. After all, for Marx, globalisation was the precursor of revolution.

Globalisation, imperialism and the state

Orthodox globalisation theorists portray globalisation as an economic process, relying on the standard liberal separation of state and the economy to present globalisation as immanent, or embedded in an economic logic which states can only react to. Rejecting these separations, some writers have analysed globalisation as a more complex interaction between global markets and state power.

In the first place, there are strong reasons to maintain some theorisation of the particular power of the United States. The US remains the victor of the Cold War, with levels of military expenditure still at Cold War levels – although they have dropped since the lunacy of the Reagan era. Cumings (1999) argues that the next century will be another American century, as the US is placed between the (Atlantic) West and the (Pacific) East. Brenner famously argues that waves of new technological investment in production currently favour the US economy over its competitors (1998). Writers such as Noam Chomsky make some compelling arguments for the case that the US is still as interventionist and bellicose as it has been since National Security Memorandum 68. Others have called globalisation Americanisation, highlighting the powerful cultural influence of the United States, especially through the diffusion of consumer and leisure goods/images.

Is globalisation the 'human face' of imperialism? There is certainly compelling evidence and argument to treat America as a uniquely powerful state with an enduring military dominance. Furthermore, recall that the ideological impetus of globalisation has been provided by a (post-)*Washington* consensus.

But globalisation has also impacted on the United States, as the Reich quotation above implies. The US state is not the single author of the globalisation narrative. There are two related points here.

Dominance does not mean omnipotence

A common error of the more conspiratorially-minded theorists of American power is to assume that the US always achieves its aims.

This is not so. There are plenty of examples of open and honest botches and failures – from the disaster of Vietnam to the tragedy-farce of the Delta Force troops in Somalia. Intervention always has unintended consequences, as (the US-led) NATO discovered in Kosovo. Despite encouraging the IMF to plough huge amounts of money into its erstwhile Cold Warrior, the United States cannot really control the nature of socio-economic change in Russia. In any case, it is not always clear that the United States is motivated by one single uncontested set of aims. Although one can clearly discern that the destruction of communism, radical nationalism, support for free markets and support for 'home' transnational companies (TNCs) are fairly uncontroversial ends, other goals or the means to pursue them are hardly uncontroversial.

Capitalism or capitalisms?

Increasing attention has been paid to a global contest between three models of capitalism: liberal (US and UK), social-democratic or corporatist (European), and developmental (south-east Asia, after Japan). Each model boasts its own advantages and relies crucially on two things: different forms of capital–state relations and different modes of corporate governance and production organisation. Divisions between a supposed 'Asian' model and an 'American' model of development have been played out within the World Bank (Wade 1996) and have been reignited in the wake of the 'Asian crisis' (Wade and Veneroso 1998a, 1998b). Moving from the role of the US, state power is also important more generally. One important component of globalisation – regionalism – is in large part authored by states in collective agreement (although there is usually a dominant partner within any region). The incremental creation of the European Union is centrally a construction of states which still act and react in nationally interested ways.

Thus, although the social and political infrastructure of the world is clearly unequal, and great power resides in some states and institutions, there is no absolute hierarchy, no totalising authority. American hegemony will always be incomplete; the neo-liberal model will be contested as long as global capitalism remains a complex and internally differentiated system. The political lesson that we can draw from this is crucial: contrary to the orthodox globalisation argument, there *is* space for resistance and struggle.

Counter-globalisations?

We arrive at the question: how can globalisation be won against the neo-liberal agenda? There have been four main concerns within the academic writing.

Positive nationalism

Some have argued that the central political response to orthodox globalisation should be a renewed engagement with the national state. The state remains the principal vehicle of popular expression, even if globalisation has eroded some of the substance of national democracy. Bienefeld argues that, because so much of orthodox globalisation has been politically structured by states, as well as agencies such as the IMF and regional trade agreements such as NAFTA, a progressive response is to struggle to forge states that allow national communities some scope of action against global neo-liberalism through the nation state. He calls this 'positive nationalism' (1994:120 *et seq.*), that is, a nationalism built on Enlightenment ideals of equality, participation and civic community (as opposed to the chauvinist nationalisms that have emerged since the end of the Cold War).

Cosmopolitan democracy

Many have argued that, if orthodox globalisation creates a democratic deficit within the national polity, globalisation should mean a deepening of democracy at different levels, both above and below the national state. The most articulate proponent of these ideas is David Held. Held outlines a model of cosmopolitan democracy which involves: regional parliaments, transnational referenda, more open intergovernmental organisations, and a reformed United Nations (Held 1993:37–44). This model has as its centre a rejection of the orthodox 'Westphalia system', that is, a global system made up of nation states, to the extent that extremely violent states might be conceived of as 'hostage takers' of their citizenry and therefore subject to international intervention (Archibugi 2000).

Held raises the issue of the construction of new forms of authority within the global system. Although there is no clear framework for a global superstate emerging, it is certainly true that new forms of authority are being constructed at the global level, both within formal intergovernmental organisation such as the United Nations

and the World Bank, and within the private and civic sphere. As a result, researchers increasingly speak not of global government (a global superstate) but of global governance (a complex web of organisations constructed across national boundaries and dealing with global issues).

Global governance and global social movements

Global governance cannot be described in the same way as conventional political science might describe a government, with a set of easily delimited institutions with a legislated presence. Global governance would involve the United Nations – which is in fact a complex 'family' of organisations, from the Security Council to bodies such as UNICEF and UNESCO; it would also include the World Bank and IMF, so crucial to the bailing out of financially distressed middle economies and the management of the permanent crisis of debt in sub-Saharan Africa. It would also include private organisations such as the London Club of private bank creditors and the Basle group which creates codes of conduct for international banks, as well as a diverse set of what O'Brien *et al.* (2000) call Global Social Movements (GSMs). GSMs include a wide variety of non-governmental organisations committed to pressuring national and international policy agendas towards a more progressive outcome. GSMs promote more environmental awareness, argue the case for dropping international debt in the Third World, defend global notions of human rights, invigilate internationally funded programmes in terms of their levels of local participation and gender sensitivity, and so on. O'Brien *et al.* analyse in detail the dynamics of the interaction between GSMs and the World Bank, IMF and World Trade Organization (WTO). Generally, they find that GSMs have made a marginal difference to how these international finance organisations work, and stress that this limited but positive engagement can be built upon.

Global civil society

Global social movements, though, are not just a component of an emerging global governance. That is, they are not just one more interest or pressure participating in decision-making at the global level along with business, states and other international agencies. Some see global social movements in a more historically innovative light: is the emergence of global social movements ushering in the creation of a global civil society? Falk argues that, as globalisation

has been driven by a neo-liberal logic, new forms of political opposition or resistance have emerged on an international scale. He encapsulates this in the notion of 'globalisation from below' challenging 'globalisation from above' (1997, 1999). The fundamental dynamic behind the emergence of a global civil society is the patently austere economic logic of globalisation from above. Global civil society emerges because there is a need to promote social, developmental and cultural considerations within the globalisation process. Inasmuch as Falk specifies what global civil society is, or might be, he concentrates on the emerging environmental networks that work at an international level.

Like that of Falk, most research on the idea of a global civil society does not detail its contemporary contours. In fact, to some extent, there is a statement of faith involved in the notion of a global civil society: it is something that academics *would like* to see emerge; it reflects a fairly pervasive anxiety about the repercussions of neo-liberal globalisation even in moderate academic narratives (Scholte 2000; Latham 1997). Underlying most of the arguments for some forms of globalisation-from-below (to remain with Falk's vocabulary) is a common analytical point of view: that globalising markets and capital must be recaptured by some social force and subject to some form of influence by societies (or a global society?). Some (for example, Chin and Mittelman 1997) have borrowed from Karl Polanyi's seminal work, *The Great Transformation* (1957). Polanyi argues that unfettered markets create such deleterious effects for society that states are required to enforce controls to reconcile the market with a minimally tolerable life for its citizenry. If we 'globalise' Polanyi, can we conceive of a new era of market freedom at the global level which will require an emerging global civil society to 're-embed' (Latham 1997) the market in some form of social accountability?

Conclusions

So far, we have identified four arguments for a globalisation which rejects the orthodox globalisation schema:

- *Positive Nationalism*: a democratic re-engagement with the nation state to forge states that can resist neo-liberalism
- *Cosmopolitan Democracy*: the creation of new liberal democratic structures and processes at the international level

- *Global Governance*: new transnational networks of authority which integrate international organisations promoting a progressive agenda
- *Global Civil Society*: a more transformative possibility in which globalisation-from-above is not only 'deepened' by the involvement of other international organisations, but challenged and restructured by a fairly autonomous global social space emerging 'from below'.

Taken together, these arguments constitute a powerful counter-orthodoxy. They argue that globalisation is not inevitable, and that the very economic and elitist nature of globalisation will provoke counter-responses as people become more aware that if politics – as a realm of influence over power – is to remain an important part of contemporary society, it must in some sense be globalised. The four arguments do, by and large, complement each other: one can imagine a positive nationalism constituting a key part of a new and nebulous form of global governance, or a reformed United Nations consulting organisations within a global civil society. Each of these counterarguments is based on a faith in new globalised forms of liberal democracy. This does not mean a rigid transposition of a multi-party model onto a global stage, but rather a broader understanding of politics as invigorated by plurality, participation and accountability, along with a general assumption that the political and the economic constitute separate realms of social activity.

Conceptualising globalisation as revolution?

There is one other aspect of counter-globalisation which is both part of the liberal democratic field and potentially more radical still. Historically, labour has organised to implement and consolidate key features of the social democratic dispensation: a more humane division between work, rest and leisure; a concern to work towards full employment; democratic states; living wages; and forms of welfare state.

It is certainly the case that labour has been organising globally, reacting to issues that emerge from orthodox globalisation but, significantly, emerging global labour politics goes to the heart of orthodox globalisation and for that reason at least present a more radical alternative to the counterarguments listed in the previous section. A globalised labour movement presents the possibility not

only of re-embedding globalisation-from-above, but of transforming it.

Some examples: labour unions have organised to stop globalised sweatshop production of consumer commodities (O'Brien 2000; Moody 1997); they have struggled against the retrenchment that often accompanies the increasingly international mobility of capital, most famously at the Liverpool and Australian docks; they have formed regional organisations (Stevis and Boswell 1997; Radice 2000:14); they have identified various antisocial practices that international firms have engaged in when investing in peripheral parts of the world economy, for example concerning water privatisation in South Africa; they have challenged the privatisation of national utilities and companies to transnational corporations and the antisocial effects of the latter (Bacon 2000); they have begun to reshape older international confederations to address the challenges of the 'new world order', notably the International Congress of Free Trade Unions (O'Brien 2000; Stevis and Boswell 1997:98); and they constituted the largest component of organised protest against the WTO at Seattle in December 1999 (Bayne 2000:136). This overlong sentence gives the lie to any pre-emptive argument that labour is a spent force or a fossil of 'old' politics.

Imagine a popular globalisation from below in which the increasing organisation of labour at the global level posed the possibility of actually addressing the *underlying dynamic* of most peoples' anxieties about orthodox globalisation. This is an argument that globalisation is, if anything, the intensification and geographical expansion of *capitalism* across global social space. The instability, recession, disempowerment, environmental pillage and elitism that feature in critiques of globalisation are all effects of the ongoing transformation of capital and market social relations. To imagine a globalised politics in the liberal mould, fashioned to resolve such virile and powerful forces, is no less utopian than it is to imagine a globalising labour politics which engages with the causes and effects of globalisation-from-above.

It is worth bearing in mind that, against the arguments of orthodox globalisation, capital is not footloose; nor is it, against the liberal arguments of counter-globalisation, 'disembedded'. For all of the complex and unstable financial architecture created since liberalisation in the early 1980s, capital relies on workers to produce surplus; as much as capital might jump from one place to another it must – like a cat on a hot tin roof – uncomfortably re-engage labour,

put it to work and extract a surplus therefrom (Holloway 1994). In other words, globalised capital is dependent on something, it is not akin to an ethereal and untouchable power, crossing a borderless world at its whim. The greatest potential to take control of globalisation-from-above, and the most powerful counter-argument to orthodox globalisation, derive from this dependency and its reproduction at the heart of global capitalism. It is likely that this form of globalisation counterargument can only gain in popular currency, as it becomes increasingly evident that – now that Soviet communism has collapsed and Keynesian welfare states are being undermined – if globalisation produces contradictions or deleterious social and environmental effects, there are no bugbears or scapegoats to blame. In this sense, globalisation's true meaning is that humanity now openly adopts or rejects capitalism on its own merits.

Guide to further reading

Amongst a legion of books that review globalisation, the best critical introduction is Scholte (2000). Scholte provides both a comprehensive and readable overview of globalisation, and a critical awareness of its neo-liberal content that gives the book an engaging normative approach. A good theoretical approach at intermediate level is given by Clark (1999). With respect to the economic history of globalisation, and current political strategies, the work of Hirst and Thompson (1996) has established itself as a seminal text, arguing that contemporary globalisation is neither historically unprecedented, nor politically inevitable. For an optimistic view of globalisation, try Ohmae (1990), who writes from a business point of view and sees globalisation as a challenge; for a pessimistic view, read Martin and Schumann (1997), who see globalisation as a process of social inequality and environmental degradation. Of course, one of the main controversial issues concerning globalisation involves the changing forms and features of the nation state. Good engagements with this issue include: Bienefeld (1994), Holloway (1994), Mann (1997), Pantich (1994), Scholte (1997) and Weiss (1998). All of these writers refute the notion that the nation state is exiting the historical stage; for example, Weiss stresses the importance of economic management, and Bienefeld and Pantich both see the state as an important political arena to make the forces of globalisation at least minimally accountable. The latter two should be read in conjunction with Radice (2000), who comes closest to a Marxist view of

globalisation. The utility of Marxism more generally, as a methodology to explain globalisation, is argued by Bromley (1999).

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2
Governance

Andrew Taylor

In the 1990s governance became a core political concept for academics. One version, the socio-centric, postulates that the growth of complex policy networks reduces the power of states, even hinting at the state 'withering away'. This chapter challenges this by arguing that increased societal complexity promotes the influence of the state's core executive. Much of its activity is directed towards creating a business-friendly environment and managing the tensions caused by globalisation. Governance is not, therefore, a neutral description of an inevitable process but an ideological narrative justifying the neo-liberal state. As the state remains central to politics there appears little to be gained from treating governance as qualitatively different from government.

History

In politics, as elsewhere, there are fashions. Governance is one. Governance has a history as long as government but by the 1920s *Webster's English Usage* described governance as obsolescent and by the 1950s as obsolete; today it is a synonym for government. Its vogue dates from the late 1980s and early 1990s and the first significant usage was probably the *World Development Report* which borrowed it from a 1989 report identifying an African 'crisis of governance' (World Bank 1992). This was a time when established models of governing were being questioned after the political-economic crises of the late 1970s and early 1980s (Goldthorpe 1984).

The collapse of the Soviet empire, the 'third wave' of democratisation, and globalisation were the backdrop to the rise of governance. Governance was also applied to states whose kleptocratic and authoritarian bureaucracies were identified as obstacles to growth (Charap and Harm 1999; Hyden 1991).

The result was a global revolution in governance. The IMF, World Bank and OECD embrace every type of polity and accept that a global revolution in governance is under way and they see their task as creating a world of neo-liberal states (Williams and Young 1994). Central to their understanding of governance is a value judgement about the nature and purpose of government, which should be reduced in size and scope. Small government is 'good' governance. Governance legitimises neo-liberal ideas on government's 'correct' functions and is presented as a rational, technical and inevitable adjustment to new political conditions created by globalisation rather than an ideological construct (Prakash and Hart 1999). This approach aspires to modernise liberal democratic theory and like all neo-liberal narratives is grounded on suspicion of the state.

> [World Bank definitions of governance:]
> ... the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development ... creating and sustaining an environment which fosters strong and equitable development, and it is an essential complement to sound economic policies. (1992:1)

> We define governance as the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes (i) the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored and replaced, (ii) the capacity of the government to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies, and (iii) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions. (2000:1)

Governance emphasises the complexity of the political process and the variety of actors and is often silent on the quality of state–society interactions, but does concede unequal participation and that some interests are more important than others.

Governance means different things in different political science subfields, and its meaning is obscured further by its use as a

synonym for government. Imprecision is increased by the fuzzy boundaries between it and related concepts such as globalisation and social capital. Whether or not we feel governance helps or obscures (this chapter subscribes to the latter view) our understanding of contemporary society and politics, its current visibility means it cannot be ignored. As governance has been used at every level from the global to the local, as well as outside the political, an all-embracing definition is unattainable. The working definition used here is: 'governance is conceived as systems of rule, as the purposive activities of any collectivity that sustains mechanisms designed to insure its safety, prosperity, coherence, stability, and continuance' (Rosenau 2000:171). These activities are undertaken by organisations other than governments, but governments specialise in them; so whilst governance occurs without government, government cannot happen without governance.

Current usage

The central focus of governance is states which are now

> ... deeply concerned with maintaining the capacity to govern in the face of great change ... countries have increasingly come to pursue a common reform agenda driven by the need for fiscal consolidation, by the globalisation of the economy, and by the impossibility of meeting an apparently infinite set of demands in public resources. (OECD 1995:3)

For the World Bank, the role of government was 'establish [ing] the rules that make markets work efficiently and, *more problematically*, [governments] correct market failure' (1992:1; emphasis added). This derived from the Bank's promotion of 'sound' economic development; the IMF broadened this into the formation of rules and institutions necessary for a framework favourable for business: maintaining public safety; protecting property and contract rights; simple, transparent, low-cost regulation; and an independent judiciary (IMF 1996).

The rise of 'good' governance

The use and meaning of governance broadened to providing 'good' governance as a response to state failure and World Bank and IMF

support for despotic and corrupt regimes (IMF 1999:352). Good governance required a

> greater preoccupation with the creation of an enabling framework for development, larger responsibilities for the private sector, a reduction in direct government involvement in production and commercial activity, and the devolution of power from the center to lower levels of government. (World Bank 1992:5)

A state pursuing good governance would:

- actively fight corruption and the use of public office for private gain
- enhance democratic procedures, institutions and principles
- institute limited terms for key public offices
- reduce government in size and function
- remove economic controls
- privatise state and parastatal enterprises
- establish and enforce codes of conduct
- promote independent and effective judiciary.

The IMF moved from 'first order' business (such as reducing government deficits, reducing inflation and reforming markets) to 'second order' business, where 'a much broader range of institutional reforms is needed if countries are to establish and maintain private sector confidence and thereby lay the basis for sustained growth' (IMF 1997a:v). A July 1997 Guidance Note identified a positive relationship between good governance and economic growth. This relationship could be promoted by policy advice, technical assistance and transparency to produce 'a more proactive approach in advocating policies and the development of institutions and administrative systems' that would promote further good governance (IMF 1997b:3). Should a government ignore good governance it could not expect IMF support and would need to demonstrate a commitment to it before support could be resumed (IMF 1997b:3, 8). The World Bank's Governance Program would help countries improve 'their public institutions, capacity building and efficiency in public sector performance and service delivery' creating a client-focussed public sector delivering services, encouraging an open, competitive, transparent business environment, based upon accountability and transparency (World Bank 2000). Capacity refers

to a state's ability to 'establish priorities and coordinate action among key societal actors' (Pierre and Peters 2000:164) and did not apply solely to Africa and the ex-Soviet bloc, for example, but to all countries.

Reinventing government: from rowing to steering

Advocates of governance proposed 'reinventing government', shifting government 'from rowing to steering', a change to be embraced by industrialised *and* developing countries because of globalisation and electoral pressure to deliver more and better services at lower cost to the taxpayer (Osborne and Gaebler 1992). This has had major consequences for the structure and process of government, and Osborne and Gaebler write that:

> ... the governments we saw that steered more and rowed less ... were clearly stronger governments. After all, those who steer the boat have far more power over its destination than those who row it.
>
> Governments that focus on steering actively shape their communities, states, and nations. They make more policy decisions. They put more social and economic institutions into motion. Some even do more regulating ...
>
> The ability to steer is particularly important today, with the emergence of a global economy. Most people understand the impact global competition has had on American industry ... But they don't understand the impact global competition has had on government. Stop and think about it for a moment, and it becomes obvious.
>
> If corporations are to succeed in today's super-competitive global market, they need the highest quality 'inputs' they can get – the most knowledgeable workers, the most groundbreaking research, the cheapest capital, the best infrastructure. This makes government's various roles as educator, trainer, research funder, regulator, rule setter, and infrastructure operator far more important than they were 30 years ago. (Osborne and Gaebler 1992:51–4)

The idea of a new governance and the shift from rowing to steering was extremely influential in the Clinton Administration in the United States and in Britain under New Labour. Vice President Gore was responsible for *ReGo* (reinventing government) initiatives; Tony Blair urged the need to 'join up' government and sought both to

reduce the cost of government and to increase its effectiveness by focussing on tasks best achieved by government. Good governance reduced budget deficits, was a positive response to globalisation, improved public confidence in government and provided better, cost effective and responsive services.

Steering worked best in the liberal democratic polity:

> Governments need to be able to make credible commitments and persuade the private sector that decisions will not be reversed due to political uncertainty. Whilst this is not necessarily related to a particular political system in the short term, *over the longer term democracy enhances stability* by giving a voice to citizens to express their preferences through an open competition. (OECD n.d.:3; emphasis added)

Governance is about making the global market work better and so cannot in itself provide the basis for radical (left-wing) political action. However, its emphasis on the creation and institutionalisation of liberal democratic freedoms (produced by the formal separation of economy and polity under capitalism) does create spaces for action and policies opposed to the governance agenda at every level, as the challenge to the World Trade Organization in Seattle (November 1999) demonstrated. The state's response is, of course, to try to retain control by enhancing its central steering capacities.

The move from rowing to steering created a problem: how to maintain control over myriad policy networks in a world of multilevel governance. Governance recognised that interests clash but usually ignores the fact that politics takes place in a capitalist political economy characterised by sharp inequalities. Distinguishing between the state's reduced structural presence in the policy process and its exercise of control shows that government has compensated for the loss of hands-on control (which was exaggerated) by reinforcing control over resources and operations. Decentralised service delivery has been accompanied by centralised financial control and a massive extension and formalisation of regulation and performance monitoring. Branding governance as new is questionable because if the centre continues to exercise control then the shift from government(rowing) to governance (steering) loses significance as it indicates the opposite of a loss of control.

Current debates

Hollowing out or filling in?

Governance enjoys considerable influence in the political and academic worlds. The state has 'had to take a brokering role, reconciling global trends and EU initiatives with local interests. Should government therefore seek to become more like a holding company than a direct provider of services?' (OPS 1997a:3). Government is:

> becoming more fragmented as the number and variety of actors increases. There is more inter-dependence between levels of government as the problems to be addressed become more complex and difficult to resolve unilaterally. Divisions of responsibility for the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes are changing; and the distinction between who finances, delivers, and administers is increasingly unclear in many programmes. The search for greater flexibility in managing public programmes can blur lines of accountability. The overall effect is to make inter-governmental relations more complex; and sub-national government a more important partner in the broad patterns of governance. (OECD/PUMA 1996a)

Government now defines policy objectives, in consultation with other institutions (local, regional, international) and policy networks, and what is to be delivered by government or agency in conformity with centrally determined priorities (OPS 1997b). The result is the *hollow state*, one of the most influential by-products of the governance debate.

Key features of the *hollow state* are:

- Privatisation and limiting the scope and forms of public intervention
- The loss of functions by central and local government departments to alternative delivery systems (such as agencies)
- The loss of functions by British government to European Union institutions
- Limiting the discretion of public servants through the new public management, with its emphasis on managerial accountability, and clearer political control through a sharper distinction between politics and administration. (Adapted from Rhodes 1994:138–9.)

Hollowing out has been used uncritically and its attractiveness has obscured a powerful countertendency: *filling in* (Taylor 2000). This is the consequence of 'joining up' government (existing components of government are recombined to achieve new objectives) and produces an increased central steering capacity. Core executives are developing a strategic steering capacity to boost their ability to co-ordinate departments by improving management across levels of government (OECD/PUMA 1996d). The core executive is:

> all those organisations and structures which exist primarily to pull together and integrate central government policies, or act as final arbiters within the executive of conflicts between different elements of the government machine ... The core executive is the set of networks which police the functional policy networks. (Rhodes 1997:14)

Complexity, a frequently cited cause of governance, militates *against* hollowing out and suggests the opposite tendency: *concentrating* influence to facilitate effective governance (OECD/PUMA 1996b). Managing complexity involves balancing policy determination and policy delivery but for the state 'this requires judicious use and regular adjustment of the instruments of control, co-ordination, consultation and accountability, which are the key tools determining the shape of inter-governmental relations' (OECD/PUMA 1996c). The state promotes coherence because it

> has been shifting from [the role] of a dominant actor toward that of a strategic enabler and co-ordinator of other actors in public policy processes. Governing means creating new, or adapting old, mechanisms to give new actors a voice, while maintaining the government's capacity to guide the process toward coherent results. (OECD/PUMA 1997)

A less dominant state?

Does the state's role as strategic enabler inevitably or logically entail a loss of dominance? Weller and Bakvis define coherence as 'the capacity of the core executive to ensure that the component parts of government, and the policies they seek to implement, are consistent and not contradictory' (1997:13). Policy is negotiated with and between a range of institutions and networks, so that governance requires 'strengthening the horizontal capacity of the

governmental apparatus; ensuring that ministerial responsibilities remain clear; and maintaining the centre's pivotal role in the strategic management of actions' (Peters 1997). Governance requires a strong strategic capacity at the centre as bureaucratic culture is departmental and hierarchical whereas governance emphasises partnerships between policy networks.

This can be clearly seen in the UK, where these co-ordination problems were mapped by the Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit's Strategic Challenges Project as a guide to how government might respond:

Conceptualising and Mapping Governance. The Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit's Strategic Challenges Project

Facts	Questions
Decision making is moving: • upwards to the EU and international institutions • downwards to the regions • sideways to the courts and specialised agencies	Will national government continue to be important in the future? Will they continue to play the same roles as now?
Turnout at elections and trust in government are falling ... but expectations of government remain high.	What threats for the UK government are posed by the transfer of power upwards and downwards and by changing attitudes to government? What opportunities are created?
People no longer fall into clear political or sociological boxes.	What other actors may become more important? How will national government interact with them?
The power of both NGOs and big business is increasing.	How might the skills national governments need to change to fit their changing roles?
Policy-making is increasingly technocratic. Advances in information and communication technologies allow much easier access to information about all spheres of government.	How will governments at all levels be held to account in future? Are there opportunities to reinvigorate democracy?

The problem of complexity

Change and complexity are terms invariably linked with governance which, it is claimed, weakens the state (Mayntz 1993). But when was a stable state ever achieved? Change is a fact of collective existence but shifting patterns of interaction disguise underlying stability (Marx and Engels 1848:38–9). Equilibrium and stability are deceptively attractive but neither is frequently observed in real life. Temporary stabilities are achieved through collective action and public policy and adaptation is not automatic but is based on actors' perceptions of the future and an imperfect understanding of the world, thereby producing failure and unintended consequences. Stability and instability are not exclusive states of political being and 'stable and unstable states are strewn together in extremely complicated ways' (Brown 1996:120). Politics is characterised by uncertainty and indeterminacy rather than the complexity stressed by many governance theorists.

Much governance theory cites society's growing complexity as reducing government power. It is *society-centric* (Kooiman 1993, 2000; Kickert *et al*. 1997). An alternative is *state-centric* governance emphasising the centre's ability to control by *exploiting* complexity (differentiation is better) which undermines governance's claims to have identified a qualitative political shift (Taylor 1997). The state's resources enable it to impose its preferences but this does not mean that there is no room for outcomes other than those sought by the state (Dowding 1994:145; Sharpe 1985:381). So is the state checked by complex policy networks? (Kooiman 1993:1–6, 35–8; Rhodes 1996:659). Governance misinterprets adaptation for qualitative change and a state-centric view sees governance facilitating central dominance of policy networks through 'divide and rule' (Saward 1997:20; Dowding 1994:145). Complexity *increases* central control because the state concentrates on core executive functions: policy determination, monitoring and evaluation; so governance signifies a change in the *methods* of control, *not* a general loss of control. Steering, as Osborne and Gaebler argue, does not produce an inactive minimal state and the hollow state is not empty but is occupied 'by the government agents as the termini of the network' (Dowding 1994:156). Indeed, 'Where central actors have had room for manoeuvre, their strategy seems to have been to maintain or enhance the power of the centre over the periphery' (Saward 1997:26). Pierre and Peters conclude 'that the state remains *the* most

powerful structure in society and it would be erroneous to think that it would be incapable of transforming itself to address the political and economic situation of the 1990s and early 2000' (2000:197). So is govern*ance* fundamentally different from govern*ment*?

Critical analysis

Central to this chapter's critique is Marx and Engels' famous claim that 'The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie' (1848:37). The state, whether hollow, steering or rowing, must balance and reconcile competing and contradictory demands, maintain capital accumulation and retain market confidence. The state is central to the capitalist political economy because it creates a consensus embracing domestic and nondomestic actors on the distribution of the national cake (*distributive consensus*) and orchestrates a consensus in support of, or at least not overtly hostile to, the status quo (*social consensus*). The state will function best when grounded on a political process in which major interests bargain and co-operate and where government has the authority, legitimacy and capacity to enforce policies. Governance theorists assert that this becomes increasingly difficult as society and economy fragment but governance does not entail an inactive or minimal state.

The state is not dominated by capital because capital does not exist as a monolith but is fractured by cross-pressures and interests. The state promotes capital accumulation not because of any alliance with any part of capital but because it needs resources to finance its activities (Offe 1975, 1984). Office has to be won by securing mass electoral support, which disguises the state's dependence on privately accumulated wealth while presenting it as an arbiter above society. 'State managers' are therefore significant actors with their own strategies (Block 1977, 1980). Competition between groups encourages conflict which may undermine capitalism's stability, so the protection of capitalism's long-term interests requires co-ordination by the state, which it can provide only if it is autonomous from the fractions of capital. Capitalism is characterised by differentiation, which generates policy networks. The state too has fractions which are often opposed by other parts of the state but not all fractions of government (or capital) are equal. The state can regulate fractional conflict because of its centrality, and its core executive promotes coherence. The state not only regulates compe-

tition *between* fractions of capital but promotes coherence *across* government (OECD/PUMA 1996c). This leaves room for different state forms, governing styles and policies. States may feel compelled to accept the logic of globalisation but this generates powerful domestic political tensions between winners and losers. Capitalism 'dispels all fixity and security in the situation of the labourer ... it constantly threatens, by taking away the instruments of labour, to snatch from his hands his means of subsistence ...' (Marx 1983:457–8). The state resolves crises and promotes competitiveness, but 'To nurture a political consensus in support [of this] require[s] considerable skills' (World Bank 1992:5).

Governance requires the strategic co-ordination of state and non-state actors so its promotion 'can be a sign of leaders in the core executive using their capacities to reshape the state to shield themselves from problems arising from operational and sometimes policy failures', and 'the evidence points to a *conscious reshaping of the state* rather than intended or unintended hollowing out' (Saward 1997:20, 34; emphasis added). The more diverse a political community the more its components interact as a *system*, and the more elaborate become the rules needed to manage interaction. Yet capitalism strives for minimal regulation and 'good governance' calls for light regulation (CBI 2000). The state's task is to resolve this contradiction (Boyers *et al.* 1997:449).

Jessop's combination of regulation theory and governance is based on the observation that both theories seek 'to explain how capitalism could remain stable over the long run despite its generic, structurally inscribed crisis tendencies ...' and emphasises the shift in the state's role to promoting cohesion (1990:154, 1995:317). The state is the product of conflicts and contradictions which cannot be permitted to run out of control, so 'it became necessary to have a power seemingly standing above society that would alleviate the conflict, and keep it within the bounds of "order" ...' (Engels 1884:576). Self-interest, ideology and short-sightedness lead capital to resist regulation, producing the apparent paradox of the state acting against capital (Marx 1983:448, 464). Regulation is accepted because much does not impact seriously due to weak implementation and, although it may impinge on individual capitals, regulation is vital for maintaining the political stability essential for accumulation, which is *the* general interest of capital (Marx 1983:451, 460).

The state's role is to regulate and mitigate instability and provide what Osborne and Gaebler (1992:3) described as the 'highest quality inputs' (Marx 1973:531). Capital needs a workforce 'fit for a variety of labours [and] ready to face any change of production' and the creation of a flexible, adaptive workforce requires state action (Marx 1983:458). Individual capitalists engage in short-sighted and self-destructive competition and the state's role is to smooth this competition in the general interest (Marx 1973:419–20). Finally, capitalism is inherently unstable, a tendency exacerbated today by the speed of communication (Marx 1983:449). Governance allocates the state key roles but the state has its own interests and enjoys 'relative independence' from 'those who empowered them' (Engels 1890:685–6). These interests comprise the good governance agenda. Capital is attracted to where investors can rely on transparent and responsible conduct of public affairs in a lightly regulated, orderly market system guaranteed by a lean but effective state. The tension between accumulation and cohesion *cannot* lead to the state withering away: 'the movement of state power upwards, downwards and sideways' is an attempt by 'state managers to regain operational autonomy ... enhance(s) the state's own strategic capacities' (Jessop 1997:96). Adaptation is seldom smooth so the state intervenes, resolving crises, regulating conflict and promoting social cohesion (Jessop 1990:175). Political institutions not only deliver important collective goods but help create 'conditions for economic progress and social cohesion' (OECD n.d.). As neither capital nor the state are unified, there must be an overall strategy for guidance and unity which requires 'not only a complex array of instruments and policies but also a continuing struggle to build consensus and back it with coercion'. So 'the state cannot just be seen as a regulatory *deus ex machina* to be lowered on stage whenever the capital relations need it' (Jessop 1990:200).

Diversity rules out a 'one size fits all' governance (Jessop 1995:315). States are always concerned with instability, so,

> since each and every mode of state policy-making is prone to failure, one must either accept that a stable state apparatus is impossible or that it is possible only to the extent that it has the capacity to flexibly shift modes of policy-making as the failures and contradictions of the dominant mode (or the prevailing policy-making mix) become more evident and threatens the state's rationality and legitimacy. (Jessop 1997:118)

As capitalism can no more manage without government than it can manage without money, effective governance depends on the state's adaptive capacity, which is improved by reducing the state's functions and enhancing its regulatory capacity. Paradoxically, the number of policy networks constitutes a major resource for the centre, and governance requires an enhanced state steering capacity (Weller and Bakvis 1997:1–4). Multiple competing policy networks and multilevel government require a strong centre and 'Only the state can give meaning, objectives and direction to governance' (Pierre and Peters 2000:198). Frequent failure encourages experimentation and variation in governance structures and processes, so:

> there exist different spheres of coherence (e.g. economic, social, political), each with its own internal logic; each reflecting a different dimension of a particular policy issue. The very notion of coherence needs to be adapted to the realities of a complex environment, and to the practical capacities of policy-making systems. (OECD/PUMA 1997)

New patterns of governance emerge from a process of experimentation in a globally dynamic environment in which the prime objective is to manage crisis and instability. Crisis acts as a powerful solvent on existing structures and ideas of governance, and the

> ... reorientation of the state requires that (a) governance as an instrument of economic performance must combine a top-down, long-term strategic vision and bottom-up, market-driven, performance-oriented action; and that (b) a new generation of organizational intelligence and new mechanisms of organizational and agency co-ordination are developed which can display market features but also offer means of effective performance quality assessment and accountability. What is required, in short, is a strategy for institutional change. (Jessop 1995:324)

Policy networks constitute the frameworks in which various fractional interests can be combined and managed.

Tensions in the network–state relationship are inevitable. The state 'becomes one participant among others in the pluralistic guidance system ... and the state's influence depends as much on its role as a prime source and mediator of collective intelligence as on its command over economic resources or legitimate coercion' (Jessop

1997:117). So 'good policy-making is less a question of avoiding contradiction than one of managing it. This implies that policy-making systems must increase their capacity to balance and reconcile divergent pressures' (OECD/PUMA 1997). The state provides a strategic overview, determines priorities, and retains substantial economic and coercive resources. There can be no 'stable state', political or economic; failure is endemic but these are the failures of *specific* governance strategies, not the failure of governance as a whole (Jessop 1997:105). For the World Bank, 'governance is a continuum, and not necessarily unidirectional: it does not automatically improve over time. It is a plant that needs constant tending' (1992:11). Governance is a different way of presenting state adaptation to failure and turbulence which are universal aspects of politics. So governance's current vogue 'may involve little more than a specific stage in a regular succession of dominant modes of policy making' (Jessop 1995:352).

Conclusion

Paradoxically, governance increases the centre's role, hollowing out is exaggerated because managing capitalism depends on state co-ordination, and the 'steering' state is highly active. Governance is not new, but the emphasis placed on it reflects the perception of increased social complexity, and the state's role is to ease the inescapable adaptation to globalised free markets. Within this process some interests, notably business, are privileged. Governance is about producing 'controlled structural change' in support of a market liberal order through a variety of state interventions. The state has resources not available to any other organisation, which enable it to facilitate negotiations, reduce transaction costs and disseminate 'best practice', and boost social cohesion (Jessop 1997:109, 112). Governance is a process, not an end, and is inevitably fragmented, but has two key aspects:

- The creation of a *distributive consensus*. This involves domestic and non-domestic actors on how the national income will be distributed; and
- The orchestration of a *social consensus* behind policies in the general interest of capital.

The state balances and reconciles competing and contradictory demands with accumulation. States are crucial in managing the capitalist political economy as they are political communities with extensive powers to influence what goes on within their boundaries. States are not markets, they are bureaucratic hierarchies and political communities embracing a range of interests which they co-ordinate, and they provide inputs which the market cannot (or will not) provide. The distributional consensus works best when based on a collaborative political process in which major interests co-operate and liberal democracy is advocated as the best political framework for markets. The political and ideological response is the governance narrative but the steering state is not inactive, nor is the effective state necessarily big.

We must recognise the importance of governance in discussions of contemporary politics but it neither supersedes nor complements traditional analyses of the state and governing. At best it represents the repackaging of pluralism, at worst the reinvention of the wheel.

Guide to further reading

Three useful introductions to the concept are Rhodes (1996), Pierre (2000) and Pierre and Peters (2000). The classic statement of socio-centric governance is Kooiman (1993). As governance informs much of what governments do, web sites such as those of the IMF, World Bank and OECD contain a great deal of information and provide links to individual governments.

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3
Postmodernism

Stephen Brown

This chapter argues that whilst postmodernism can provide some useful insights into society and politics, overall it fails to provide a basis for radical ideas. Further, I contend that despite offering gestures in the direction of emancipatory politics, postmodernism's philosophical basis can be interpreted as inimical to deeper analysis of contemporary society. To substantiate this claim I examine its belief in the fragmentary and its emphasis on describing social phenomena as linguistic, and conclude that these serve to obscure the more subversive and radical sides of its nature.

There are two ways of thinking about postmodernism. The first is to interpret it as a theory. Like other theories, liberalism, socialism and the like, it has a set of primary texts and secondary sources, proponents and enemies. Secondly, postmodernism can be thought of as a description of a particular society at a particular time, namely *our* society right now. Again, this is how liberalism can be thought of: it has been argued that we live in a liberal society since we have certain rights and freedoms. The *history* of postmodernism can be viewed in a similar way. We can think firstly of its theoretical genealogy, and find out who was the first person to write about postmodernism or who the first postmodernist thinker was and secondly we have to consider why many theorists regard contemporary society as 'actually existing postmodernism'.

Some historical background to the theory

It is extremely difficult to trace an idea back through time to its definitive beginning. Typing 'postmodernism' into a search engine produces 80,000 responses, with many offering different historical accounts of the term. Further, after trawling through historical sources and the secondary literature it is still possible to find instances where essence precedes existence – where an idea was articulated before it was actually given a name. I would argue that this is the case with postmodernism. For its theoretical basis came into being during the tumult of the nineteenth century, long before the term itself was invented.

> [Postmodernism] designates the state of our culture following the transformations, which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature and the arts. (Lyotard 1979:9)

The growth of scientific knowledge, the revolutionising of productive forces and the gradual emergence of democracy throughout large parts of the west during this time brought about unparalleled and chaotic changes in how people lived and thought. Many interpreted these transformations as tremendous opportunities. It was envisaged that the concentration and exploitation of man's capabilities would inevitably mean that everyone would benefit. It would have been difficult not to have been seduced by the triumphalism of the era. Nevertheless this explosion of capitalism, along with its political upheaval and social transformation, to say the least, drew a widespread critical response. Whether in terms of fiction, empirical study, religious tract or straightforward theoretical assault, one could pick any number of writers who revolted against these forces of economic and scientific 'development' and could read them as the first postmodernists.

The grounds for this reasoning are that whilst capitalism and modernism are distinct, and were criticised as such, they were symbiotically related, with each propelling the other forward. Thus modernism came fully into being with the birth of the factory system, urbanisation and the railway system, and capitalism was made solid by scientific discovery and technological breakthrough. This unprecedented revolution, as well as melting all previous social relations, convulsed the imaginations of those who lived through it.

For all the nineteenth century's astonishing invention and accumulation, what stand out in its ideas are theories of pessimism, destruction and loss. Of course, it would be wrong to regard all thought of this period as having apocalyptic implications, but one only has to glance through the opening pages of *The Communist Manifesto*, think of the implications of Darwin's theory for cherished religious beliefs or plough through Schopenhauer's magnificently gloomy oeuvre to deduce that much of the Victorian cultural and intellectual climate was as dark and revolutionary as its mills.

Yet for postmodernists, it is the thinking of Friedrich Nietzsche and his near refutation of Enlightenment ideas that most closely exemplifies much of what is meant by postmodernism. Though still regarded as the first existential philosopher, his enigmatic writings on the death of morality, the illusion of progress, the impossibility of truth and objectivity and the inconceivability of universal rationality have also seen him inaugurated as the first postmodern theorist. Whilst never actually using the term, these positions, and his notorious belief that our actions and institutions are nothing more than the 'Will to Power', are ideas that postmodernists have incorporated into their analyses of contemporary thought and society. Nietzsche, of course, was not the only critic to challenge the modernist articles of faith during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Later, writers such as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1972), Daniel Bell (1962) and Ruth Benedict (1989) all developed and refashioned the growing scepticism towards the empty promises of modernism. However, it is reasonable to maintain that Nietzsche was the first prophet of postmodernism.

> The best argument we partisans of solidarity have against the realistic partisans of objectivity is Nietzsche's argument that the traditional Western metaphysico-epistemological way of firming up our habits simply isn't working anymore. (Rorty 1991:33)

A brief history of the term

Postmodernism's theoretical basis then is rooted in the social and intellectual disruptions of the nineteenth century and, following Nietzsche, is sceptical and dismissive of ordinary ways of thinking about society, morality and truth. The term 'postmodernism' itself, though, was first used to describe new movements rejecting modernism in architecture during the 1970s. Though the leap from

Nietzsche to urban planning may seem great, the ideas are quite similar. What both were rejecting was the idea that 'one style suits all'. For Nietzsche morality and truth are not universal. There are many interpretations of each and one need not be constrained by modernist ways of thinking. Similarly, the new architects set out to distance themselves from their homogeneous modernist inheritance. One may think of the tower blocks that circle many towns and cities as both capturing what postmodern architecture was attempting to transcend and as encapsulating a modernist utilitarian ethic that Nietzsche thoroughly despised. What was envisaged in its place was a more pluralist approach producing buildings that display '... an eclectic mixture of styles ... tempting us to abandon thoughts of progress and enjoy heterogeneous messages' (Hayden White, quoted in Cahoone 1996:386).

From here, the use of the word 'postmodern' increased exponentially as did the theoretical claims underpinning it. The French writers Michel Foucault, François Lyotard, Luce Irigaray and Jacques Derrida and the American philosophers Hayden White and Richard Rorty intensified the conceptual assault on the main elements of western modernism and rationality (see Cahoone 1996 for extracts from these writers). Though these influential thinkers often resisted the label, allies and critics alike have all maintained that they are continuing the 'postmodern project'.

Why is contemporary society thought of as postmodern?

Postmodernism is not only a theory; it is also meant as a description of society. A brief history of the subject must pay some attention to why contemporary society is so often characterised as postmodern. As Lemert, for instance, notes, '... it is impossible to go anywhere in the world without encountering intellectuals, artists or politicians wondering about postmodernity' (1997:32). Whilst there is a hint of exaggeration about this, it is true that the term has become near ubiquitous and is as much at home in advertising and literature as it is in academia.

One reason why postmodernist ideas have proliferated and gained credence in the last decade or so is the influence neoliberalism has had on western culture and politics. During the 1980s, successive conservative administrations in America and the United Kingdom succeeded in emphasising the primacy of individualism, reducing the influence of the state and lowering taxation.

This political reorientation was summed up by Margaret Thatcher's famous remark that 'there is no such thing as society'. By chance, the thinking behind these moves cohered with a number of postmodern ideas. This, along with the growth of feminist and identity politics, added to the interest in postmodern theory. What these historical shifts signalled was the end of a particular way of thinking about politics and philosophy. Whereas previously both had centred around the assumption that the white male collective would always predominate, the nature of social and economic change during the 1980s and 1990s ensured that this could no longer be taken for granted. Whilst pro-market liberal economics waged war on the viability of collective action, feminism and identity politics made significant challenges to the supremacy of the white male. Lemert narrows the success of postmodernism down to three interrelated changes in western society that have led to what he regards as the reality of a postmodern world. These are the sudden collapse of the Euro-American colonial system, the 'defeat' of communism and the dramatic rise and opposition to '... the very idea of a unified and universal world culture based on Euro-American values' (1997:32–3). Hence, we can think of the ensuing conflicts, contradictions and struggles that flowed from these changes as 'actually existing postmodernism'.

What is Postmodernism?

As its name implies, to be a postmodernist is to believe that something called modernism is now at an end and is no longer possible.

Modernism

Modernism is the set of ideas, also known as the Enlightenment, that have provided a basis for the structures and processes of capitalist society for the last three centuries. Central to modernism is the fundamental and democratic belief that human life can only be improved via the application of human rationality. Primarily this means human relations and institutions have to be explained and justified by argument and evidence. What this excludes of course is any reliance in answering these questions on faith or emotion. Essentially, if something cannot be measured, predicted and scientifically thought of as real then it will have no role to play in improving human life and in all probability is going to be detri-

mental to it. This revolutionary idea was behind the technological transformations and the economic and political upheavals that have characterised recent European history. One way of grasping how much modernism has created is to try to imagine life without telecommunication, transport, democracy or weapons of mass destruction. Each of these relies on certain measurable elements behaving in predictable ways to produce largely predictable outcomes. If things can be measured and predicted, they can be controlled and improved. Thus the modernist faith in rationality implies a number of other ideas. Firstly, things can be known unproblematically. Secondly, somebody has to be in charge and finally 'things can only get better'.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is both the rejection of these ideas at a theoretical level and the belief that they have failed in their own terms. For postmodernists it is far from obvious that the Enlightenment conception of knowledge is as straightforward as it would have us believe. Rather than being the innocent discovery that it is often presented as, postmodernists think of knowledge as something created by particular people to suit particular interests. Postmodernists also raise awkward questions as to who is in control of this knowledge and who benefits from it, and doubt whether its relentless accumulation in the future will really benefit everyone. Postmodernism is also the idea that for all modernism's aspirations to improve people's lives, its history shows the opposite. The twentieth century, *the* modernist century, witnessed death and chaos on a gigantic scale. Either this was caused by modernism, or was simply too powerful for modernism to resist. In either case, the postmodernist argument goes, these are hardly reasons for us to believe in it.

The theoretical elements of postmodernism can be broken down into four parts: metanarratives, truth, language and fragmentation.

1. Metanarratives

Firstly, postmodernism maintains the 'death of metanarratives'. Lyotard writes: 'I define postmodernism as an incredulity towards metanarratives' (1979:13). By this he means two things. Firstly that to be a postmodernist is to dismiss the idea that there is one definitive interpretation of an event or history, and secondly that postmodernists no longer take seriously the idea that history is heading for a happy ending.

For postmodernists these Enlightenment ideas rely on totalitarian ways of thinking. Thinking that there is only one correct answer to historical questions or that history has one inevitable direction crushes the life out of deeply complex historical circumstances. It ignores subjectivity in favour of objectivity, it gives no room to the plurality of historical voices and fails to allow for the chaotic nature of history and instead merely imposes its own anachronistic ideas on them.

The main 'metanarrative' that postmodernism is hostile to is that of Marxism. Marxism explains the whole of history and society as a playing out of the struggle between those who control economic production and those who have to sell their labour. This struggle, it is believed, will eventually result in revolution and communism. So, for Marxists, above the apparent chaos of events – the 'meta' part – there is a broader, simpler story of a struggle for dominance between two forces – the 'narrative' part.

For postmodernists this belief is not credible. Firstly, Marxism tries to explain society and history primarily in terms of economics, which is but one parameter that motivates people. Secondly, its supporters see people belonging to one of two rigidly defined classes, which for postmodernists does not capture the complexities and ambiguities of social relations, and finally, the tyranny of past communist regimes illustrates the terrorism lurking within all modernist ideals and explains why they collapsed.

Ethics, morality and religion are also prime examples of metanarratives. Their explanations are also universal and offer definitive answers to questions about how one should live and think about the world. For postmodernists, though, these ideas are totalitarian. Since they only have one rationale to tell, whether it be utility, rights or God's will, other perspectives are drowned out and imperiously rejected.

2. Truth

A second postmodern theme related to this mistrust of metanarratives is the postmodern scepticism about the notion of truth. There are two themes to this scepticism. Firstly, truth for postmodernists is bound up with modernism's oppressiveness. Truth is a unitary idea – there can only be one truth about a particular person or event and it is an exclusionary idea; those that object to the final verdict are regarded as a nuisance. Further, postmodernism forces us to pay attention to who is deciding about what to call truth. This brings us

to the second element of why postmodernism is wary of talking about truth. For it sees all human actions and institutions as motivated by a Nietzschean 'Will to Power'. This is the idea that principles such as truth and objectivity are not the benevolent concepts modernism took them to be but are instead the manifestations of humanity's veracious appetite for power and control. Further, there is no way out of this enclosure. Appeals along the lines of 'Because it's true!' are simply moves in a wider struggle for acceptance and dominance.

3. Language

> *Essence* is expressed by grammar. (Wittgenstein 1953:371)

A third feature of postmodern theory is its emphasis on language. Postmodernists aim to deflate all modernist claims and one effective way of doing this is to remind us that modernism's manifestos and grand pronouncements are not reflections of a reality somehow unavailable to others, but are nothing more than linguistic constructions. The words may have their effects as the notes played by an orchestra do, but as with music, there is 'nothing outside the text' to which these notes refer. Whereas, labouring under the illusions of modernism, we may say that when we write our curricula vitae we are definitely referring to ourselves, the postmodernist would reply that another stronger possibility is that you are using language to construct a particular version of yourself. Postmodernists think this way because along with Weedon they believe that 'Neither social reality nor the "natural" world has fixed intrinsic meanings which language reflects or expresses' (1987:22), but that language is used only to manipulate and control. Religious language is a case in point. Other postmodern writers, most notably Baudrillard, have extended this scepticism to the rest of the media, maintaining that we are so bombarded by images and replicas of things, that these supersede the 'real world' and in effect *constitute* the place where the 'real world' once was. One major consequence of this emphasis on language is that postmodernists reject all forms of essentialism. Primarily, this means that postmodernists, like Rorty for instance, urge us to 'avoid the embarrassments of the universalist claim that the term "human being" ... names an unchanging essence, an ahistoric natural kind with a permanent set of intrinsic features'

(1991:5) and to abandon other essentialist categories such as 'woman' and 'class'.

4. Fragmentation

Finally, since there is no unique truth, but a supposed plurality of conflicting yet valid claims and a choice of mini narratives rather than one overarching explanation, postmodernism is closely identified with fragmentation. For the postmodernist, contemporary society can no longer be understood in the modernist ways of right versus left, worker versus boss or mass versus elite. These categories are too inflexible to describe the constant shifting of alliances and political attention. More specifically, postmodernists reject the Enlightenment notion of the subject, not only for being exclusively thought of as white and male but as no longer being a stable unitary being. For postmodernism, the modernist Cartesian idea of the self as existing only in so far as it is a rationally thinking and acting being is now to be thought of as nothing other than the contingent roles it happens to be playing at any particular time. Postmodernism has written the obituary of the figure at the centre of the humanities and has replaced it with something far more fleeting and temporary.

Does Postmodernism help us to understand society and politics?

> Copacabana. Thousands of bodies everywhere. In fact, just one body, a single immense ramified mass of flesh, all sexes merge … a kind of single being, living the same life, with the same fluids coursing through them, aquiver with the same passions. *What social or political status can there be for an entity of this order?* (Baudrillard 1997:74; emphasis added)

As postmodernism rejects the conventional assumptions of traditional research it cannot be regarded as a constructive theory. That is, its scepticism towards the possibility of knowledge, its hostility towards generalisation and its favouring of the subjective over the objective do not lend it to the grand social explanation of, say, functionalism or Marxism. Under these theories, the individual or the particular event are predominantly seen in terms of how they can further establish the truth of a certain thesis. The subjective contingency and sheer idiosyncrasy of a certain era and its people can

become lost in this drive to commit them to the theoretical mill. What postmodernism can provide, though, is some reasons for allowing attention to linger on the marginal, the subjective and fragmentary, without having to justify this attention in terms of some 'higher', more complete theory. Paradoxically, these 'micronarratives' can then suggest something about contemporary politics and society.

In order to test this view, I will look at some excerpts from Jean Baudrillard's *Fragments*. Widely regarded as an important postmodern thinker, Baudrillard is renowned mainly for his work on how media images have superseded reality and his notorious 1991 essay denying that the Gulf War took place. *Fragments* is largely aphoristic in style and has no overall argument, and like many of his books it is a collection of disconnected seemingly random thoughts and observations on politics, philosophy, art and culture.

The first fragment is about cashpoint machines:

> In front of the cash dispenser everyone takes on an air of death. Such is the terrible reflection of money on a face. This is not the reflection of gambling on faces racked by the possibility of a fortune. It is the anxious mask of voracious collusion, lit by the advance recognition of money. Never calm, never cool. This explains why the card is often forgotten – unconsciously left in the exchange. (1997:105)

One modernist response to these remarks could be that ATMs are highly efficient ways of giving people what they want in a cost-effective way. The banks make more of an honest profit and people can get at their money whenever they like. As for the other modernist response, I am unaware of the Fourth International's position on cash dispensers but perhaps one reply could be that they fit into the worker's struggle with the bourgeoisie since they are owned by banks that own the capital that owns the factories that own the workers that use the cashpoint machines.

What these modernist replies have in common is that in fitting something as banal as a cashpoint transaction into a wider theory they neglect the unpleasant nature of the actual experience itself. For the postmodernist, this observation could act as a catalyst to explore other ways in which supposedly convenient technology was deadening human experience or to observe other anonymous public spaces where people's behaviour was equally furtive and indifferent.

Gradually, perhaps, a postmodern mosaic could be created combining people's thoughts, photographs, forgotten cash cards and receipts. In an unsystematic and perhaps in unexpected ways such an exercise may indicate whether society is as isolating and fragmented as postmodernists believe.

The second fragment refers to the 1992 opening of the Olympic Games:

> The international tenor sings to the royal box. On the left there is a giant television screen, on which he appears in close-up for the 120,000 spectators. As he cuts too small a figure in the actual surroundings, all faces are turned to the screen to see him. As he becomes aware of this, he too turns towards the screen and sings facing his own image. But then, given the camera angle, he is shown in profile on the screen. The spectators in the stands then immediately turn back towards where he is standing in flesh and blood. No one is looking at anyone else anymore. (1997:47)

Both wings of modernism at this point would cease to believe that postmodernism can help us to understand society, and at this point would be either so incredulous or so apoplectic with fury that they could not reply. For postmodernists, though, this seemingly insignificant moment can represent how individuals are so enmeshed in the consumption of signs and images that the referent, the entity that is actually being filmed, vanishes in importance. The spectators no longer watch the flesh-and-blood singer, preferring to watch the reality of the screen image. Similarly, individuals in society are isolated from the reality of the news and are so dependent on images and signs that it becomes impossible to refer to the authentic events. Baudrillards's writing on the Gulf War reporting explores these ideas further.

For the postmodernist, this means that society and reality are increasingly divorced from each other and that individuals are becoming incapable of social action thanks to their 'hyperconformity'. This contemporary social process heralds the end of conventional ways of thinking about the social, since it is abolishing the modernist notions of class conflict, civil society and solidarity. As Norris and other critics contend, postmodernism is prone to exaggeration and this is a case in point. Whilst it plays a useful role in reminding us of the dangers of relying too heavily on the media, Baudrillard's idea that we are trapped in a prison of their making does

seem rhetorical and excessive. Further, it contradicts the postmodern insistence that we must be incredulous of metanarratives. Nevertheless, there is enough plausibility in the idea to remind us of the dangers of media saturation and, as the fragment illustrates, just how keen people are to shun what is real so as to attend to its image.

The final fragment is about political advertising: 'Portuguese election poster: "It's so good the first time, when it's done with love. Vote Socialist!" The poster shows a young couple arm in arm' (1997:29).

Again, one modernist response could be that election campaign advertising is an efficient way of reminding and influencing people. Figures could be collated proving that areas with more advertising had a higher turnout. Cost–benefit analyses could even calculate the cost per vote in marginal seats so that parties could organise their campaigns in the most effective way. An alternative response could be that this is another piece of evidence that all the bourgeois parties of the left in Europe are in the pockets of the capitalist class. For the postmodernist though, it is an indication of a society where the political has all but vanished. It is not that the poster represents anything meaningful, but that the poster and the advertising are as political as contemporary society is going to get. Hence, one may consider the British 'election' of 2001 as a truly postmodern affair.

These examples may seem remote from the task of understanding politics and society. Writing about cash dispensers and election posters seems almost criminally indulgent in an era characterised by vast inequality and exploitation. Yet it is not that these observations are dealing with the abjectly trivial. It is plausible to maintain that their dream-like inconsequence belies their serious intent of reminding us that there are issues of power and control lurking behind even the most banal social situations. However trivial they may seem to the modernists, for postmodernists they make the ordinary seem eerily luminous and alive with wider social questions.

This fragmentary approach may also help us to avoid what Jameson sees as the paralysing effects of continually thinking in totalising terms.

> What happens is that the more powerful the vision of some increasingly total system or logic ... the more powerless the reader comes to feel ... and the impulses of negation, revolt and social transformation are increasingly perceived as vain and trivial in the face of the model itself. (1991:35)

Further, as the growth in new social movements and their successes testify, thinking in terms of micronarratives need not mean becoming apolitical. (For examples, see recent articles in <http://attac.org>.)

Thus, leaving aside its tendency for hyperbole, postmodernism can play a part in helping us to understand politics and society. It does not offer a 'grand vision' of the social order, yet its fragmentary approach can at least play a role in supporting wider critiques.

Can postmodernism provide a basis for radical claims?

A case can be made that postmodernism is a fairly radical and potentially emancipatory theory. Firstly, its philosophy does ask some deep-rooted questions about some main assumptions of modernism. Secondly, many feminists claim that these ideas can be radical and challenging, and finally postmodernism's emphasis on fragmentation and plurality allows politics to be thought of in a different, less monolithic way. However, whilst these aspects of postmodernism can be considered on the whole progressive, postmodernism only provides a weak and partial basis for radical claims.

Postmodernism and the individual

One radical aspect of postmodern theory is its rejection of the modernist individual, which lies at the heart of the modernists' project. Postmodernists reject what they see as the unified and metaphysical nature of this conception. That is, instead of seeing the subject as something like a 'ghost in the machine' they see it as constructed by what people have been persuaded to believe. Hence Mouffe, a French postmodern writer, writes that 'to be capable of thinking about politics today ... it is indispensable to develop a theory of the subject as a decentred, detotalised agent ...' and that 'no identity is ever definitively established' (1993:19). We ought not to be held captive by the image of a unitary subject but instead should interpret the self as linguistically constructed and existing 'at the point of intersection of a multiplicity of subject positions between which there is [no relationship] and whose articulation is the result of hegemonic practices' (1993:12).

The argument, then, is that if we can change our 'selves' then we can refashion politics in emancipatory and radical ways. On the face of it, this does sound quite radical. The Cartesian way of thinking about persons as isolated units of thought, production or con-

sumption permeates the way modernist institutions treat their subjects. To use a metaphor, this modernist self is like Robinson Crusoe having to defend himself against outside threats and having to get by and survive on his own. It is a lonely and rather hostile picture and postmodernists are right to bring it to our attention. Further, the very idea that the self is constructed rather than existing as a ghostly observer is quite a radical idea. However, postmodernists' critique ultimately fails to impress because having ignored the social and economic context of the self, they cannot offer a mechanism for how this unitary self could be changed. So, all that is offered is the idea that somehow the unitary self can be transformed, not by transforming her economic and social surroundings but by becoming convinced that Wittgenstein's (1953) philosophical deconstructions of the self were right. At best then, postmodernism is radical about the self, but not enough and not for the right reasons.

Postmodernism and truth

Another aspect of postmodern theory that could be interpreted as potentially radical is the idea that modernist political arguments can never be true. This lack of truth, as Mouffe describes it, is because '... there is no point of view external to all traditions from which one can offer a universal judgement' (1993:18) and because language itself constructs the world we think of as existing independently of us. This stance reveals racism and sexism, say, as nothing more than crude moves in a wider struggle and not even capable of being crude. Further, in place of one unitary truth will be 'multiple forms of rationality' that allow us to speak of the 'credible' and 'plausible', and this will hasten moves towards the extension of the democratic revolution.

This element of postmodernism is ostensibly radical in that it aims to reduce the dialogue of the oppressors and the powerful to mere moves in a language game. Like the previous idea, though, it fails as a radical suggestion. The primary reason for this failure is that the argument cannot avoid the accusation of relativism. Relativism is the idea that there is no criterion of truth external to our own linguistic and explanatory efforts and that 'truth' is only determinable relative to these frameworks. The postmodern argument, at this point, is plainly relativist, and a moment's thought is enough to see that the belief that 'it is the case that there is no such thing as truth' cannot be made intelligible.

A further reason to reject this idea as being potentially emancipatory is that, although it empties the discourse of the powerful of truth, it also has the same effect on the testimonies of the oppressed, as Geras writes in *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind*:

> [if] there is no truth, there is no injustice. In less simplistic terms, if truth is wholly relativised or internalised to particular discourses or language games or social practices, there is no injustice. The victims and protests of any *putative* injustice are deprived of their last and often best weapon, that of telling what really happened. They can only tell their story, which is something else. Morally and politically, therefore, anything goes. (1995:107)

Postmodernism and feminism

A third reason why postmodernism may be considered as a radical theory is that many feminists have interpreted it in this way. Feminists such as Flax, Mouffe and Scheman have argued that the postmodern critiques of rationality, the modernist self and essentialism can play a significant role in developing an emancipatory feminist philosophy. They argue that these modernist constructions, along with their political manifestations, all work to exclude and oppress women and since the conventional socialist, liberal and radical feminisms are based on these ideas, they, in turn, also must be rejected. In Mouffe's words '... The very question of what a feminist politics should be has to be posed in completely different terms' and ultimately '... in the domain of politics ... sexual difference should not be a valid distinction' (1993:82).

> The [modernist] project that fell to both empirical science and 'rationalism' was to tame the female universe. Empirical science did this through aggressive assault and violation of her 'secrets'. Rationalism ... tamed the female universe through the philosophical neutralisation of her vitality. (Bordo 1987:102)

Whilst these objectives are themselves quite radical, how they are to be brought about is, again, left unsaid. In addition, it is far from the case that such thinking persuades the majority of feminists. For instance, some feminists, such as Brodribb (1994), argue that abandoning essentialist notions of care, subjectivity and emotions bleaches contemporary feminism of its distinctiveness, and others, like Maynard (1995), argue that just at the time when women are

making inroads into the public realm, rejection of modernist ideas are inappropriate. Thus, again, it is debatable whether postmodernism can be taken seriously as an emancipatory philosophy.

Postmodernism and plurality

Finally, it may be argued that postmodernism's stress on plurality and fragmentation is radical in that it allows for and encourages less monolithic forms of politics to flourish. Accordingly, for postmodernists, the growth of ecological movements, identity politics, gay rights movements, animal rights campaign and consumer politics all indicate that modernist politics has either failed or has been superseded. This is why Mouffe argues that 'in order for the struggle against power to become truly democratic, an equivalence must be established between the defence of workers' rights and the rights of women immigrants and consumers' (1993:19). It must be recognised that these social movements have had success in terms of gaining support, publicity and influence on public policy and also that the conventional poles of radical politics, social democracy and Marxism, have suffered considerable damage to their credibility in recent times. The defeats that the left suffered in the 1980s, the neutralising of workers' movements and the defeat of 'communism', led *inter alia* to a decline in the belief of the economic struggle. Even the British Labour Party's 1997 election victory came at a time when the modernist idea of a state was being threatened by globalisation. Postmodernism, then, may offer a certain degree of radicalism and emancipatory potential in the face of such disillusionment but this is severely circumscribed by its very fragmentary and ephemeral nature. Protests and campaigns against transnational corporations can often highlight aggravating features of contemporary life. However, the postmodern ethic is prevented from drawing together a coherent critique of the wider significance of these features by its own self-imposed theoretical limitations.

Does postmodernism supersede explanations based on class?

> The current preoccupation with 'postmodern' diversity and fragmentation undoubtedly expresses a reality in contemporary capitalism, but it is a reality seen through the distorting lens of ideology. It ... disguises the underlying systemic unity, the imperatives which create that diversity itself while at the same time

> imposing a deeper and more global homogeneity. (Woods 1995:261)

Postmodernism then can only hint at the idea of radical and emancipatory politics. On the surface, its critiques are pertinent and provocative. It opens up other areas of enquiry that otherwise may have been passed over, yet its philosophy means that ultimately it cannot outdo them. Thus its incredulity towards metanarratives can bolster the idea of local action, yet it can be interpreted as a refusal to analyse the broader economic features of the capitalist system. For, if anything, capitalism is a globalising process, which means that to understand the brutal extension of its logic throughout the world and it its baneful power and influence over our personal lives, one cannot live by micronarratives alone. Capitalism is also a class system and although postmodernism can act as a counter to the types of analysis that sweep away all other social categories in their drive for explanation and closure, the overall effect of postmodernism's disbelief in metanarratives is to continue the ideological process of turning class into an unword. Woods' remarks remind us that failing to differentiate between the status of various struggles leads to the terminus of capitalism disappearing from view '... buried under a welter of fragments and "difference"' (1995:261).

To try to rescue postmodern theory from such 'conservative' accusations, I have tried pointing to evidence of its radicalism, for instance its critique of the modernist self. Nevertheless, even here, in failing to account for the economic and social causes that produce and sustain certain selves, the postmodern celebration of multiplicity simply appears in isolation, and for me merely blends into employers' demands for greater flexibility and 'multitasking' that are currently being thrust upon swathes of the working population.

Finally, postmodernism's embrace of relativism emphasises its alienation from the sweaty and unpleasant aspects of contemporary capitalism. To treat as linguistic constructions the fact that 36 million Americans live in poverty or that 'More than one billion people in developing countries lack access to basic health and education, safe drinking water and adequate nutrition' (MacDougal 1997:32–3) and that according to Brenner the 'success' of modern capitalism has depended on the '... systematic assault on employees' working conditions and wages' (1997:64) can at best be seen as a catastrophic failure of political analysis or at worst as indicating that postmodernism represents 'an apology for capitalism'.

Conclusion

Postmodernism is a notoriously difficult concept to elucidate fully and I have etched out only a minute aspect of its elusive and infuriating nature. It can be concluded, though, that postmodernism can play a role in describing politics and society and can even be considered a description of society itself. Its main theoretical components, in so far as it has a determinate theory, can be regarded as radical and emancipatory, at times and in certain contexts. Ultimately, however, postmodernism fails to provide a basis for radical thought and far from superseding analyses based on class and capitalism it ends up obscuring the referents of these analyses. Yet as the Baudrillard examples (hopefully) illustrate, as long as one does not take postmodernism too seriously it can be a useful slave to more compelling ways of looking at the world.

Guide to further reading

There is a vast literature on postmodern politics and philosophy. A good place to start is Appignanesi (1999) which does a good job of introducing the key themes in an accessible way. Luntley (1995), Lemert (1997), Lyon (1994) and Best and Kellner (1989) are more advanced introductions. For more critical appraisals see Callinicos (1989), Norris (1993) and Geras (1995). For a splendid selection of essays and examples of postmodern theory see either Appleby (1996) or Cahoone (1996). For feminist responses to postmodernism there are Grant (1993), Hekman (1990), Brodribb (1994) and bell hooks (1990). This last is available on the internet. There are thousands of internet sites worth visiting, many providing useful links and summaries of postmodern thinkers. The one at Microsoft World is a good starting point. Finally, to get a feel for the apocalyptic tone of postmodernism, anything by Nietzsche would do, but especially his *Beyond Good and Evil* (1973).

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4
Citizenship

Keith Faulks

This chapter argues that citizenship is a very useful concept with which to analyse current social and political processes because its component parts, namely rights, responsibilities and participation, are crucial elements in any system of governance built upon democratic principles. If we feel attached to our identity as citizens, the legitimacy of government is ensured. Moreover, through the exercise of responsibilities and participation the common institutions of politics can be maintained and improved. Where the values of citizenship are neglected or rejected, governance remains unstable. Citizenship can then provide the basis for an emancipatory politics that is both inclusive and egalitarian, provided that the limits of the citizenship of modernity, which I take to be synonymous with liberalism, are acknowledged. This raises the question of how modern citizenship differs from premodern citizenship and implies that a new postmodern theory of citizenship needs to be developed if the potential of citizenship is to be fulfilled.

What is citizenship?

The status of citizenship formally expresses an individual's membership of a political community. The rights and responsibilities which flow from this membership shape the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the political community, and differentiate citizenship from mere residency. In societies which claim to be democracies, citizens not only enjoy the right of abode,

they normally possess civil and political rights which facilitate political participation. *Civil rights*, such as freedom of speech and worship, and the right to justice, form the foundation for the institutions of civil society by providing a legal framework for expression, association and communication between citizens. Civil society is thereby granted a degree of autonomy from formal governmental institutions. *Political rights* bestow voting and participation rights in the polity and therefore form the basis for popular sovereignty so central to democratic governance. More controversially, citizens may also be entitled to *social rights*. These often include publicly funded health care, social security and education. As we shall see in this chapter, the potential conflict between these different kinds of rights is an important issue in contemporary discussions of citizenship.

As well as enjoying rights, citizens are required to undertake responsibilities such as paying taxes, and jury or military service. The appropriate balance between rights and responsibilities is another controversy that has become particularly relevant in recent years. With the growing influence of communitarianism upon citizenship theory, greater emphasis has been put on the need for increasingly plural societies to intensify and extend citizens' duties and obligations in order to maintain their coherence (Tam 1998).

Three further 'Rs', in addition to rights and responsibilities, have been prominent in citizenship debates in recent years: *resources*, *recognition* and *residence*. The question of resources is often centred upon the tense relationship between citizenship, with its emphasis upon equality, and capitalism, which generates great inequalities (Turner 1986). The problem of recognition is related to debates on equality and difference that are central to identity politics, and particularly feminist analyses of citizenship. It has been argued by theorists who advocate a 'politics of difference' that exclusion from full citizenship stems not just from material inequality: the assertion of a universal citizenship, it is contended, crushes social diversity (Young 1990). Finally, the relationship between residence and citizenship has become problematic due to processes of globalisation (Delanty 2000). In modernity, the form of political community most associated with citizenship is the territorial state. Globalisation, it has been argued, challenges this relationship by undermining the power of the state, extending discourses of citizenship to new forms of political community, such as the European Union, and by stimulating an awareness that our rights and responsibilities must extend

both below and beyond the state if they are to be sustainable (Faulks 2000, Chapter 6).

The development of citizenship

In his history of the concept, Riesenberg (1992) contends that citizenship has passed through two main phases. The first (premodern) phase of citizenship he traces from ancient Athens, which saw the first systematic institutionalisation of citizenship, to the French Revolution of 1789 that marks the beginning of the second (modern) phase of citizenship. What gives such a generalised approach credibility is that we can indeed identify important differences between the two phases. How then did modern citizenship differ from its predecessors?

What the French Revolution did was to bring to a head a number of trends and ideas that were already fermenting in Europe and which together were shifting citizenship significantly (Faulks 2000). Crucially, what was different about modern citizenship was its emphasis upon *equality*. Premodern forms of citizenship, even where citizenship was democratic and participatory as in the ancient Greek *polis*, were inherently exclusive and hierarchical. In the ancient world, to be a citizen differentiated the individual from 'lesser' beings such as barbarians, slaves and women. The French revolution, in contrast, fused the liberal ideal of equality with citizenship. Consequently, from the eighteenth century the history of citizenship has been the gradual extension of the status to groups previously excluded from the benefits of the status such as workers, women, the disabled, sexual minorities, and so on. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, social movements, such as the suffragettes' struggle for the vote in the early twentieth century in Britain, were able to utilise the language of equality to expose areas of social life where the distribution of resources and opportunities was anything but equal.

Of course, critics of liberalism have rightly noted that the equality associated with liberalism has been abstract and limited in practice by a number of methodological assumptions that liberals make. In particular, liberals assume that the individual is prior to society and therefore can be understood as an independent rational actor separate from any social context. As Marx (1994) famously argued in 'On the Jewish Question', this encourages self-interest to become selfishness. We see others' rights as barriers to our own opportun-

ities. Liberals' support for the 'rigours' of market forces have also created a high degree of scepticism about politics in general. In their support for markets as the most effective method for producing and distributing resources, liberals have often been wary of democracy on the grounds that it may be used to interfere with the freedoms of the market and may, as the quote from Hayek below illustrates, imperil the liberties upon which a market society depends.

> What is called economic power, while it can be an instrument of coercion, is in the hands of private individuals never exclusive or complete power, never power over the whole life of person. But centralised as an instrument of political power it creates a degree of dependence scarcely distinguishable from slavery. (Hayek 1944:108)

Thus the egalitarian thrust of citizenship has been limited by an emphasis upon the individual rather than the community, and on economics rather than politics. Because of this, as a method of governance the organising principle of citizenship has been secondary to the logic of market relations, particularly in countries with a strong liberal tradition, such as the United States and Britain.

Despite these problems with liberalism, however, for me a postmodern theory of citizenship does not reject the modernist project out of hand, but instead endeavours to identify the problems these liberal contradictions cause for citizenship and seeks ways to move beyond them. The liberal goals of equality, individual liberty, universal rights and the belief that we can improve our social institutions rationally all seem to me to be commendable aspirations. The question is how these aspirations can be achieved. Contemporary political and social theory is beginning to take up this question, as the vast literature on citizenship demonstrates. In the rest of this chapter I will examine some of the issues raised in this literature.

Contemporary debates and controversies

Current discussions of citizenship often take as their starting point Marshall's classic defence of a liberal conception of rights. His theory will be used here to give structure to debates in citizenship theory concerning the five 'Rs': rights, responsibilities, resources, recognition, residence.

Rights

The differentiation of citizenship rights into three kinds (civil, political and social), with which I began this chapter, comes from Marshall's famous essay *Citizenship and Social Class* (1992). First published in 1950, this essay was written in the context of a developing welfare state in Britain which, Marshall argues, marked the end point of an evolutionary process towards a rounded sense of citizenship. The social rights that the welfare state institutionalised had complemented civil and political rights to the extent that the inequalities of capitalism had been legitimised. The extension of citizenship to the social sphere meant that equality of opportunity was assured through public education, and that the misfortune of illness and unemployment would not now lead inevitably to poverty but would be offset by welfare benefits.

> Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All those who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. (Marshall 1992:18)

Marshall did, however, see that this new form of social citizenship stood in potential conflict with the other rights of citizenship. This is because, as Marshall observes, civil rights serve a supportive function to the market economy by protecting rights of property and contract. Political rights too, it can be argued, were necessary to capitalism to ensure that the state was controlled by the capitalist class through representative democracy. The problem comes, however, when political rights are extended to the whole population, as they began to be in the nineteenth century. There exists then the danger, from a capitalist's point of view, that political rights would be used to interfere with the freedoms of the market. Indeed, this is exactly what Marshall suggests has happened in modern industrial societies. The introduction of social rights marked a historic political compromise between capital and labour. For Marshall, this compromise meant that capitalism had been significantly modified by principles of social justice. In effect, by the mid-twentieth century citizenship had evolved to a point where a meritocracy had been achieved.

At the turn of the millennium, however, it has become clear that Marshall's theory was overly optimistic about the effectiveness and

longevity of social rights. Within liberal political thought the dominant model since the 1980s has been the neo-liberalism of Hayek rather than Marshall's social liberal approach. In policy terms, neo-liberal theory has had a huge influence upon governments in the United States and Britain and to a lesser extent Europe (Faulks 1998).

For neo-liberals, social rights are opposed rather than complementary to civil rights. Even political rights need to be curtailed so that the market, which it is argued is a more effective distributor of resources than citizenship, can be allowed to operate without interference from the state. Such arguments seek to exploit the apparent tension between different kinds of rights that Marshall identified. For neo-liberals, social rights not only subvert market principles of supply and demand, they also undermine individual liberty because they entail high levels of taxation. Thus it could be argued that extensive social rights infringe property rights. Moreover, social rights create a dangerous 'dependency' culture where individuals rely upon the state rather than their own initiative, with dangerous implications for wealth creation.

The incompatibility of civil and social rights is a theme that has been taken up by theorists from ideological positions other than neo-liberalism. Neo-Marxist Colin Hay argues that civil and social are 'fundamentally antithetical principles of social organisation' (1996:76). The point is, however, that it is only because of the context in which citizenship is constituted that citizenship appears to be ridden with internal contradictions. To argue that civil and social rights are incompatible is to accept the liberal logic that underpins many current assumptions about citizenship. Liberals, from Locke to Nozick, have wanted to assert that the existence of civil rights is natural and, in the case of Hayek (1944), to stress that social rights are far from natural and instead are the product of a dubious process of social engineering. If citizenship is to fulfil its emancipatory potential, it is essential to move beyond this dualistic logic, where one aspect of citizenship is seen as inherently opposed to another. In fact, civil rights, or any rights for that matter, are not natural but rely upon the sanction of the polity for their existence. One only has to observe the widespread abuse of human rights across the globe to see that it is political will and not nature that provides the basis for the protection of rights. The effort to naturalise certain kinds of rights is an ideological move that stems from the desire to strictly limit the realm of politics and to assert the market

as the dominant organising principle of society. For citizenship to be inclusive a more holistic approach is needed that sees the components of citizenship as complementary rather than conflictual and dualistic.

This does not mean that particular forms of social rights cannot be more or less effective than others. It is becoming accepted by various theoretical positions that the form of social rights defended by Marshall has been unresponsive to citizens, has tended to stigmatise rather than empower citizens, and has failed to remove significant inequalities (Faulks 1998:43–5). Given that the exercise of rights and responsibilities depends upon citizens possessing basic resources, it is necessary to explore new forms of social protection that meet citizens' basic needs, while avoiding some of the pitfalls of state-centred welfare. I will address this issue below. First, however, I will continue my argument in support of holistic citizenship by exploring citizenship responsibilities.

Responsibilities

Marshall's essay is primarily concerned with citizenship rights and he says little about responsibilities. This is typical of liberal accounts, which have been overwhelmingly concerned with curtailing the power of the polity and ensuring individual liberty. For communitarians, an overemphasis upon rights has undermined the communal ties that are necessary to bind societies together. The result has been an increasingly selfish and dysfunctional society where individuals see rights as instruments for the pursuit of self-interest. Writers such as Etzioni (1995) and Selbourne (1994) interpret increases in crime, drug addition and family breakdown as signals that a rights-based citizenship is far too thin and unable to hold modern pluralist societies together.

Green political thought has also highlighted the weakness of a rights-centred approach to citizenship. Like communitarians, many ecologists doubt whether rights by themselves have enhanced human happiness. In fact an overemphasis on rights may have encouraged an atomistic and materialistic value system that underestimates our interdependence with nature. Moreover, where rights concern the unsustainable consumption of the earth's resources, we must rethink citizenship in ways which recognise our deep responsibility to maintain the environment, to ensure the rights of future citizens by conserving resources, and by showing concern for other

species who, if they do not have rights, are at least entitled to respect and protection (Smith 1998).

Other theoretical positions too have argued that obligation should be central to conceptions of citizenship. The whole socialist tradition could be said to be based upon the values of solidarity and reciprocity. Certainly in Marx's early writings his critique of liberal citizenship was based upon the argument that an emphasis upon abstract rights, which hold sway only in the public realm, left the inequalities of market society untouched and therefore failed to generate a sense of community and mutual responsibility (Marx 1994). Some feminists have pointed to how the neglect of emotion and mutual care that must exist in healthy relationships has rendered liberal theories of rights disembodied and atomistic. The concept of 'intimate citizenship' captures well the idea that our obligations to others must extend to the private as well as the public realm and must embrace care and compassion for others as well as more formal political relationships (Lister 1997).

> The principle of duty, the sovereign ethical principle of the civic order, demands both general and particular duties of the citizen – to himself, to his fellows, and to the civic order as a whole. (Selbourne 1994:147)

Again if we treat citizenship holistically, as I have argued we should, then rights do indeed need to be in balance with responsibilities. All of the theories I mentioned in this section are therefore right to acknowledge that we are not in fact atomistic individuals but we live instead in a network of interdependent relationships with each other, the polity and nature (Twine 1994). Therefore for rights to be sustained we must accept responsibility for the maintenance of common institutions of governance and develop a greater sense of obligation to both humanity and the ecology. This is why I would argue that an ethic of participation is so central to a developed sense of citizenship. Indeed, it is active participation that most differentiates citizenship from mere subjecthood. An individual might enjoy social rights, as indeed Soviet citizens did under communism, but without meaningful political rights and responsibilities, individuals are subject, in Thomas' (1994) words, to an 'alien politics' where their ability for self-government is denied them.

As Dalton's (1996) exhaustive empirical study of political participation across Europe and the USA shows, trust in traditional

institutions of government is declining and voting turnouts across liberal democracies are falling. There is then a strong case for extending statutory responsibilities to include compulsory voting, as well as looking to more deliberative models of participation such as citizens' juries, referendums and stronger local and regional government (see Faulks 2000, Chapter 5).

It is a mistake, however, merely to reverse liberalism's emphasis upon rights and stress responsibilities at the expense of entitlements. This is the major flaw in many communitarian arguments. Etzioni (1995), for example, wishes to see a freeze on the creation of new rights, while Selbourne (1994) denies that universal social rights are necessary to effective citizenship. Again this logic is dualistic rather than holistic: rights and responsibilities must go together if citizenship is to be effective. The exercise of our duties and obligations relies upon access to resources such as information, time, access to government, and income.

Resources

Marshall's primary concern in *Citizenship and Social Class* was to show how the development of social rights had civilised capitalism and thus rendered a more revolutionary overhaul of a market economy unnecessary. Indeed, Marshall goes as far as to say that 'inequalities permitted, and even moulded, by citizenship do not any longer constitute class distinctions in the sense in which that term is used for past societies' (1992:44). However, it has become clear in the 50 years since he published his essay that Marshall underestimated the incompatibility between capitalism and citizenship. This has been particularly apparent since the 1970s, when capitalism began to shift away from the 'organised' form of capitalism, characterised by an interventionist state, towards a new disorganised or deregulated phase. The details and complexities of these changes are beyond the remit of this chapter but the crucial point is that capitalism is not only an inherently unequal system of production, it is highly dynamic and prone to rapid changes which upset the balance of the social forces that underpin any particular form of citizenship. There is no doubt that the development of social rights that Marshall took to be irreversible was in fact dependent upon a set of class relationships that involved a high degree of working-class organisation, symbolised in Britain by the power of the trade unions and the growing potential of the Labour Party as a genuine competitor to the Tories for government. Disorganised

capitalism is characterised by a more fragmented class structure and a more internationalised and 'flexible' mode of production (Lash and Urry 1987). This shift in the balance of power between capital and labour, which had sustained the welfare state, allowed neo-liberal governments, such as those led by Reagan in the USA and Thatcher in the UK, to roll back the frontiers of the welfare state in the name of competitiveness and efficiency.

What this highlights is that the values of the free market and those of citizenship stand in tension with each other and represent distinct organisational principles upon which society can be based. For citizenship to be secure, social rights cannot depend upon the vagaries of the shifting fortunes of the market. Moreover, values such as competition, self-interest and materialism, which have been promoted vigorously by neo-liberals, clash with the virtues of citizenship such as co-operation, interdependence and community service. As long as citizenship is seen as secondary to the values of capitalism it will remain a thin, superficial status prone to dilution by ruling elites.

> If the extension of democratic citizenship is not in the interests of the powerful then struggle is as likely to lead to repression as to the gaining of rights; indeed more likely. Thus the interests of the dominant class (and the state) are as important as lower-class struggle for an understanding of the rise and extension of modern citizenship. (Barbalet 1988:36)

In his seminal study of social policy in advanced industrial society, Esping-Anderson (1990) notes that the balance between the two organising principles of citizenship and capitalism has differed greatly across societies. In some states, and in particular the Scandinavian states, social rights are strongly entrenched and do go a long way to alleviating the inequalities of the market and creating a sense of social solidarity. However, Esping-Anderson's main point is that the measure of a truly successful policy is the extent to which that policy allows an individual to enjoy a reasonable standard of living outside of market forces. This does not mean that one has to abandon markets entirely. It does mean however that citizens' duties and rights must take precedence over issues of production and consumption as the basis for ordering and governing society. Perhaps the key weakness in Marshall's theory of social rights is that many welfare benefits were tied into the very fabric of market relations. Thus, to enjoy the highest rates of unemployment benefit or state

pensions an individual needed to have contributed through paid employment. This approach to social citizenship clearly discriminates against those who are disadvantaged in the labour market because of class, gender, disability, or 'race'.

For social rights to be a secure basis for the exercise of rights and responsibilities, it is necessary to break the link between work and citizenship. The most fully developed policy idea that meets this challenge is a citizens' income (CI), which is a guaranteed payment to all citizens and funded through taxation. As Van Parijs (1995) has argued in a sophisticated defence of CI, the values associated with citizenship such as justice and equality require a material base in order to be meaningful. The attractions of a CI for a holistic citizenship are too numerous to set out in detail here (see Faulks 2000:119–24). However, the key advantage of CI is that it grounds social policy upon the assumption that we are citizens first and consumers and producers second. CI breaks the connection between work and social rights and thereby recognises that the diverse activities associated with active citizenship require a material base for *all* citizens and not just workers. CI would be of particular benefit to groups, such as women and ethnic minorities, which have been disadvantaged under state-centred forms of social citizenship. The key point, however, is that we recognise that the performance of citizenship is premised upon certain basic needs being met.

Recognition

Liberals such as Marshall have assumed that citizenship will be universal in its benefits and demands: that citizenship will recognise the equality of all members of the polity. The problem with this assumption has been highlighted by feminist writers, amongst others, who argue that a single universal model of citizenship in fact entails the suppression of important differences. In particular, the individual in liberalism is a gendered construction that implicitly assumes that only white males are capable of the rational decision-making associated with political citizenship. A politics of difference, as advocated by writers such as Iris Young (1990), entails abandoning universal notions of citizenship in favour of a 'group-differentiated citizenship' that recognises diverse needs and rights. Government should acknowledge and fund groups that are characterised by a shared way of life and recognise that such groups should have rights of consultation and veto powers over policies that affect their interests.

> Liberalism has traditionally asserted the right of all rational autonomous agents to equal citizenship. Early bourgeois liberalism explicitly excluded from citizenship all those whose reason was questionable or not fully developed, and those not independent. Thus poor people, women, the mad and feebleminded, and children were explicitly excluded from citizenship ... Today the exclusion of dependent persons from equal citizenship rights is only barely hidden beneath the surface. (Young 1990:54)

There can be little doubt that liberalism's emphasis upon the rational, autonomous individual as the basis for citizenship has tended to ignore the complex interplay of social structures such as gender, class and ethnicity, and how these structures have constrained the action and opportunities of individual agents. Strategies such as a citizens' income, strong anti-discrimination legislation and possibly some kind of affirmative action may all be required if citizenship is not to remain exclusive in practice. However, the assertion of group-differentiated rights is a more radical policy because it seems to abandon liberal notions of citizenship altogether. The danger with group rights is that we end up treating individuals in terms of a particular aspect of their identity, when in fact all individuals have complex multiple social identities and roles. Young's theory fails to answer a number of difficult questions related to this. I shall mention just two. First, which groups can claim special rights and how would the development of new groups prevent a huge proliferation of special interests? Second, by denying the possibility of individuals fully understanding the nature of other individuals who belong to different groups, how can we avoid creating a very static and uncommunicative politics where there exists little basis for shared rights and responsibilities?

The idea of a differentiated citizenship tends to assume that equality and difference are incompatible. Again, to think of these ideas as opposites is to accept the dualistic logic of liberalism: liberal theory has asserted equality over difference, theorists like Young reverse this. However, it is not the principles of liberal citizenship that are at fault here but rather how they have been applied in practice. Liberal citizenship has been restrictive in practice because of its assertion of the market and the exclusive state. It is the inequalities of the market and the exclusive character of the nation state that prevent less powerful social groups from enjoying equal citizenship. I have already indicated how such citizenship-sensitive

policies as CI could rebalance the imperatives of politics and economics in favour of the former; in the next section I will explore the relationship between the state and citizenship.

Residence

The relationship between residence and citizenship was hardly an issue for Marshall. He assumed that citizenship expressed a relationship between the individual and the state and by implication citizenship had no meaning beyond its association with the state. In recent debates, this relationship has been challenged by globalisation. Of particular significance are global risks that stretch beyond national boundaries and that cannot be managed effectively by states acting in isolation. Ecological problems, the threat of nuclear weapons and waste, international crime and migration are increasingly interconnected and require new forms of political community to be successfully governed (Faulks 1999, Chapter 10). What this means is that the close historical relationship between nationality and citizenship has to be rethought. Globalisation has exposed a deep contradiction in liberal models of citizenship. On the one hand, liberals emphasise universal human rights. However, on the other hand, liberals have accepted a world organised by a state system, which by definition supports exclusive notions of citizenship. Habermas (1994) is one of those who has recognised this problem and has argued that citizenship should be based purely on residency and not tied to some spurious cultural unity or blood line as national citizenship has asserted.

Some of the most exclusive states historically, such as Germany, have recently recognised the problem a close symmetry between nationality and citizenship creates for minorities in particular. In 1999 the Social Democratic government in Germany broke the close tie that had existed between blood ties and social membership by granting automatic citizenship to all children born to foreign residents. Soysal (1994) has argued that such events are part of a wider process which is leading to the development of postnational citizenship. She points out that even before the 1999 law, long-term residents in Germany who did not enjoy citizenship nonetheless possessed significant civil and social rights.

> A new and more universal concept of citizenship has unfolded in the post-war era, one whose organising and legitimating principles

> are based on universal personhood rather than national belonging. (Soysal 1994:1)

Events in the European Union (EU) might appear to give some support to Soysal's argument. In 1992 the Maastricht Treaty created the concept of European citizenship which, in addition to developments in the social sphere such as the Social Chapter, granted EU members new rights alongside those they enjoyed at a national level. However, one of the main weaknesses of both EU citizenship and Soysal's theory is that both envisage a very passive model of citizenship. The guest workers that Soysal cites as examples of postnational citizenship in fact do not enjoy political rights. Thus crucially they do not have the opportunity to shape society through active participation. Similarly, though EU citizenship does grant the right for citizens to vote in local and European elections anywhere within the Union, national elections are not affected by European citizenship. As the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 reasserted, EU citizenship is secondary to and dependent upon national citizenship. Moreover, in attempting to create a European identity, there is a real danger that the EU will continue to adopt a very inward-looking and exclusive approach to world problems such as migration and trade inequalities. The tightening of border controls enshrined in the Amsterdam Treaty and the failure to reform the Common Agricultural Policy, which gives European farmers an unfair advantage over producers from other parts of the globe, are hardly evidence that EU citizenship is yet postnational in character.

Paradoxically, globalisation suggests that for citizenship to be sustainable the principle of subsidiarity that was introduced but left ill-defined at Maastricht could be the basis of a new kind of citizenship. Heater (1990) has christened this *multiple citizenship*. Interpreted radically, subsidiarity involves the devolution of government in ways which in effect bypass national states. We cannot merely replicate the exclusivity of national citizenship by creating a European superstate. To institutionalise multiple citizenship, where citizens have a number of overlapping relationships with a number of political communities, political reform is required to devolve the responsibilities and rights of citizenship to local and regional levels. At the same time, the embryonic development of a global civil society associated with the work of NGOs and international systems of government such as the UN needs to be built

upon to form the basis for a genuine global or cosmopolitan citizenship (Delanty 2000).

Conclusion

For citizenship to be a truly emancipatory concept, it is important to build upon the strengths of the liberal model, while at the same time looking to transcend the weaknesses inherent in a liberal approach to the five 'Rs' of citizenship. The main strength of liberal citizenship is that it recognises the importance of individual rights to a stable and free governmental system. Respect for basic rights protects the individual's autonomy and this is crucial for democratic action. I have argued against group rights, as advanced by advocates of a 'politics of difference', precisely because such rights assume a partial and static identity that fails to respect the complex and holistic identities that form the foundation for individuals' autonomy.

However, an emphasis upon those rights which support the market and neglect of the social basis of citizenship has tended to make liberals wary both of extensive democratic constraints on the market *and* of the responsibilities side of the citizenship equation. As communitarians point out, our rights depend upon citizens taking mutual responsibility for the maintenance of social and political institutions. A neglect of our responsibilities imperils our rights. However, too often communitarians ignore the material foundations of citizenship and treat the failure of people to exercise their citizenship as an unfortunate by-product of too many social entitlements. In place of the dualistic logic of both liberalism and communitarianism I have argued for a holistic conception of citizenship, where rights and responsibilities are equally important and indeed are intimately connected.

For citizens to perform both their rights and their responsibilities, however, it is essential to recognise that individuals must be provided with the resources necessary for active participation, upon which citizenship depends. In liberal societies, citizenship, and particularly social rights, have been secondary to the market relations. I have argued that citizenship can only be inclusive if it is independent of the market and becomes the main organising principle of society. This would undoubtedly mean regulating the market much more extensively than liberals generally advocate. It also means providing citizens with a guaranteed income.

Finally, globalisation means that we cannot rely on states to defend our rights and facilitate our responsibilities. Planetary problems are highlighting the need for greater co-operation between diverse political communities and the need to rethink citizenship in ways which no longer privilege the relationship between the individual and the state. As Heater's concept of multiple citizenship highlights, our rights and responsibilities in the future will need to extend to levels of governance both below and above the state in ways which increasingly highlight the incompatibility between the exclusive state and citizenship.

Guide to further reading

Useful histories of citizenship can be found in Heater (1990) and Riesenberg (1992). Faulks (2000) and Turner (1993) provide critical overviews of the issues the concept raises for social and political thought. Marshall's (1992) essay is still the classic examination of citizenship rights. On the importance of responsibilities, see Selbourne (1994) and on ecological citizenship see Smith (1998). Twine (1994) explores the relationship between resources and citizenship. Lister (1997) is an excellent analysis of the question of difference and its relationship to universal notions of citizenship. For an overview of the impact globalisation is having on citizenship see Delanty (2000).

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5
Civil Society

Georgina Blakeley

Civil society gained its current popularity in the context of democratisation, whether this was in terms of explaining the transition from authoritarian rule to liberal democracy in Latin America and Eastern Europe or of explaining the deepening of democracy in already established democracies in the west. Its usage in this context, however, has been hampered by the concept's normative elasticity. This is not just a result of the careless way in which many theorists have used the concept, although this is a factor, but rather because normative ambiguity exists within the concept itself. Civil society contains both liberal and democratic norms. This is both its main strength and its main weakness: it explains why it appeals to so many diverse theorists, yet it also makes its usage difficult. Despite these difficulties, however, this chapter will argue that civil society still remains an important conceptual tool today.

Civil society is a notoriously slippery and ambiguous concept to use. Indeed, such is the ambiguity of civil society that many analysts today question the 'usefulness' of civil society as an explanatory concept at all. Kumar, for example, ended his article tracing the history of the concept of civil society by questioning the extent to which civil society was more useful than other related concepts such as the public sphere or citizenship (1993:391–2).

Yet, in many ways, civil society is relatively easy to define. Most authors would agree that civil society refers to the intermediate sphere between the state and the private realm of the family, in

which citizens associate voluntarily and organise independently to manage their own affairs.

> Civil society ... is the totality of social institutions and associations, both formal and informal, that are not strictly production-related nor governmental or familial in character. (Rueschemeyer *et al.* 1992:49)

As such, the ambiguity surrounding civil society arises not from definitional confusion, but from the conflicting norms within the concept itself. This normative ambiguity explains why, on the one hand, civil society holds appeal for liberal democratic elites, backed by such organisations as the World Bank and the IMF, who see in civil society the ability to act as a check on the power of the state whilst simultaneously acting as a complement to its activities. On the other hand, civil society can appeal to marginalised social movement actors who see in civil society the chance to expand and deepen democratic spaces. As a result of this duality, many therefore probably empathise with Walzer's lamentation that 'I want to join, but I am somewhat uneasy with, the civil society argument' (1992:105).

Much of this ambiguity undoubtedly comes from the long intellectual history of the concept and the different uses to which it has been put.

> Few social and political concepts have travelled so far in their life and changed their meaning so much. (Pelczynski 1988:363)

However, it is also important to emphasise that the many different political theorists who have turned to civil society as a conceptual resource have generally done so in the face of remarkably similar problems. Ever since the development of a capitalist market economy on the one hand and a liberal political nation state on the other, theorists past and present have struggled with a set of similar problems. In particular, how to combine the pursuit of individual self-interest and freedom, which capitalism requires, with the recognition that we live in a community which, perforce, requires some kind of social cohesion and some degree of governmental authority. For many theorists, civil society has in some form or another provided a solution to this problem.

> What was common to all attempts to articulate a notion of civil society was the problematic relation between the private and the public, the individual and the social, public ethics and individual interests, individual passions and private concerns. (Seligman 1992:5)

Indeed, the key division between theorists and the norms with which they imbue civil society relates to the way in which they position themselves with regard to the differentiation between public and private realms. Liberal theorists, past and present, see this distinction as constitutive of civil society and integral to its very survival. Other theorists see the liberal separation of spheres as tenuous and/or something to be struggled over and contested.

Historical trajectory

The idea of civil society has its origins within Enlightenment thought. It corresponds to a particular historical moment in the development of liberal capitalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries characterised by the struggle of the newly emerging bourgeoisie to assert its rights. Out of this struggle emerged an economic sphere which was structurally separate from the formal political realm. Within this sphere, and protected by the rule of law and their own associational networks, bourgeois individuals were free, at least in the negative sense, to pursue their own private ends. Yet, in so doing, individuals became tied into networks of production and exchange which implied a mutual dependence. The eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher and economist Adam Smith encapsulated this contradiction, which would come to characterise civil society, in his idea of the 'invisible hand': namely, the unintentional way in which the pursuit of private gain could result in the promotion of the interests of society as a whole.

This ambiguity was taken up by the German philosopher Hegel (1770–1831) who saw civil society as the sphere within which individual self-interest could be reconciled with the demands of the community. Hegel writes, in a way that is reminiscent of Smith, that within the sphere of civil society where individuals pursue their own economic aims, 'subjective selfishness turns into a contribution towards the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else' (Hegel 1991:199, 233). Hegel's civil society was simultaneously the arena within which individuals pursued their own particular self-interest

as well as that within which they acquired ethical ends via membership of a corporation. Through membership of corporations, individuals cease to be merely private persons and become part of the wider community. Hegel argued that 'it is necessary to provide ethical man with a universal activity in addition to his private end. This universal [activity] which the modern state does not always offer him, can be found in the corporation' (Hegel 1991:255).

This reconciliation of particular self-interest with ethical ends was also possible because although Hegel saw the modern economy as the defining essence of civil society, civil society was also much more than that: it was the realm of social and civic institutions as well. Hegel's vision of civil society represented both the economic realm in which individuals pursued their private ends and also the realm of social and civic associationalism by means of which individuals pursued ethical ends which went beyond their self-interest. The ambiguity of Hegel's *burgerliche Gesellschaft*[1] was therefore no accident. It means both bourgeois and citizen precisely because for Hegel civil society contains the individual both as bourgeois and as citizen.

Marx rejected the possibility put forward by Hegel that civil society could reconcile individual self-interest with the demands of the community. For Marx, civil society was virtually synonymous with bourgeois society and became reduced to the economic sphere of labour, production and exchange. Marx saw civil society as a historically determined phenomenon characterised by certain forms of production and certain social relations coterminous with the growth of capitalism and the emergence of the bourgeoisie. Civil society arose as a result of the separation of spheres which depended on the rise of the bourgeoisie in a market sphere structurally separate from formal state power. But, although distinctions were abolished in political society, the equality of political society masked the inequality of the real world of civil society. Civil society and its conflicts remained for Marx 'the true source and theatre of all history' whilst political life and the state stand apart in the imaginary heaven of the bourgeoisie (Marx and Engels 1975:38).

1. The German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies juxtaposed the German terms for community and society – *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* – in order to distinguish two kinds of association, one based in bonds of kinship and the other based in self-interest. Hegel's term can be translated as either bourgeois society or civil society.

As Marx wrote in the 'Critique of Hegel':

> It is an historical advance which has transformed the *political estates* into *social* estates, so that, just as the Christians are equal in heaven, but unequal on earth, so the individual members of the nation are *equal* in the heaven of their political world, but unequal in the earthly existence of *society*. (1975:79; emphasis in the original)

Thus, whereas other theorists attempted to reconcile the market inequalities of civil society with the formal equality of political life, and the pursuit of self-interest with the preservation of the public good, Marx questioned instead whether this was possible at all within the framework of the distinction between state and civil society.

For Gramsci, the twentieth-century Italian intellectual and founder of the Italian Communist Party, much of the richness of Hegel's concept of civil society was restored. Like Hegel, Gramsci saw civil society as encapsulating the economic realm as well as the realm of social and civic institutions in which men pursue not only their private interests but also ethical ends. Gramsci's view of civil society as the sphere, not just of economic conflict, but of cultural–political struggle as well, thus contrasts sharply with Marx's reductionist view of civil society. Nevertheless, Gramsci's vision of civil society also retained the critical edge of Marx's concept of civil society. For Gramsci, civil society was less a site of reconciliation and more a site of conflict where different social groups struggle for hegemony. In the words of Eley: 'Civil Society provides opportunities for *contesting* as well as *securing* the legitimacy of the system' (Eley 1992:324). As such, civil society is a plural and competitive sphere. Yet Gramsci's civil society bears little relation to a pluralist model of society in which groups compete freely on a fairly equal basis. Rather, Gramsci stressed that civil society reflects the inequalities of class, race and gender which structure the society in which it is embedded. Civil society is the site of unequal power relations and struggles.

For Gramsci, civil society is therefore compatible with social divisions and inequalities and may indeed, according to Funes Rivas, be seen as a promoter of inequality to the extent that those who are already powerful will have greater possibilities to take advantage of civil society to increase their quota of power (1993:67). In this way civil society mirrors and reproduces socio-economic inequalities. Hence the need to differentiate between 'different' civil societies by

emphasising the class content of organisations in civil society. Civil society should therefore not be reduced to a pluralist interest-group analysis where associations are seen as enjoying equal rights and resources. On the contrary, the class content of organisations within civil society should be taken into account (Pereira 1993:371). In this way, using the concept of civil society does not rule out class analysis, rather it demands it.

The Marxist critique of this liberal public/private distinction, upon which the concept of civil society is based, has been revived and considerably developed within feminist theory. Like Marxists, feminist theorists criticise the public/private split which, by definition, excludes some at the expense of others. Feminists argue that civil society was conceived as a patriarchal construct because the abstract 'bourgeois individual', who was free to engage in commerce, exchange and commodity production in the sphere of civil society, was inevitably male. Civil society, in its original sense at least, was not a sphere accessible to women (Blakeley 1998:180).

Civil society thus remains a problematic concept for feminists in that it rests on precisely the division which feminists have been criticising for so long: the division between a public and a private sphere where women's exclusion from the former is based upon the undemocratic norms and relations in the latter (Rai 1994:210). It is difficult for feminists, as it is for Marxists, to see civil society as the sphere in which these contradictions can be reconciled, for they are the constitutive essence of civil society, not some fault to be corrected.

Current usage

Political science's interest in the concept of civil society revived in the 1980s and 1990s as the world witnessed its supposed resurrection in democratisation processes in Africa, South America and Eastern Europe. The revival of this concept drew upon and developed the parallel discourse on social movements which first arose in Latin America in the 1970s to explain the explosion of new collective actors onto the public stage in the midst of brutal authoritarian regimes (Blakeley 1998:177). In many ways the new social movements were synonymous with civil society writ large or, as Pearce remarks, sociologists talked about 'new social movements'; political scientists about 'civil society' (1997:60). But, whatever the label used, academics were engaged in trying to explain the same phenomenon: the new collective actors were perceived as the

important beginnings of an associational network – the so-called resurrection of civil society – which threatened to challenge not only the authoritarian regimes per se, but also conventional assumptions about the kind of democratic polity for which these collective actors were struggling.

Within this context of democratisation, however, it quickly became apparent that there were contradictory conceptions of civil society. In particular, two discrete concepts of civil society are at work depending on whether one is explaining the transition from some form of authoritarian rule to a liberal democracy or explaining the deepening of an already established liberal democracy. The first concept of civil society, which explains the role of civil society in challenging authoritarianism, stresses popular agency and collective action. Civil society is seen as a sphere where those in social movements and associations are engaged in pushing forward the democratic project and their own ideas of what democracy should entail. Their role is not simply one of protecting a democratic model that has already been established; it is a developmental role to build and shape the kind of democracy they wish to see established. The second concept, which explains the role of civil society in consolidating and maintaining democracy once established, seems to lose this developmental edge and to assume a more reactive and protective role.

The idea that there may be different civil societies can be borne out by the earlier 'conceptual switching', commented on above, between social movements and civil society. Theorists tended to talk about social movements, rather than civil society, in the context of the breakdown of authoritarianism and the struggle to establish democracy, whilst the term civil society was generally used in the context of the consolidation of democracy. The term social movement seemed more capable of capturing the diversity, the agency and the 'effervescence' of associational activity in the fight against authoritarianism: a mood which Vaclav Havel characterised as a 'turn to life itself' (quoted by Fine 1997:10). Rarely was civil society used in this context of struggle; on those occasions when civil society was used it was done so in a theoretically vague manner. But, according to Honneth, this theoretical vagueness, far from being problematic, was 'a distinct strategic advantage' because it 'served to tie together all the spheres of social action not belonging to state institutions, insofar as these spheres could serve as a basis for the construction of a democratic opposition' (1993:19). In other words, it was irrelevant at that stage of the democratisation process if

economic institutions of the market were placed alongside shanty-town associations, as long as they were all involved in the struggle against authoritarianism.

On the other hand, the concept of civil society itself appeared more suited to describing the process of consolidating democracy once the framework of liberal democracy had been established. It is also within this context that civil society came to appeal to those in the advanced industrialised states as a means of revitalising liberal democracy there. In this sense, analysts provided often quite lengthy checklists which detailed the role of civil society in maintaining the stability of democracy as well as in improving the quality of democratic government. This entailed the classical liberal preoccupations of providing a counterbalance to state power, of holding the state accountable (White 1994) and of promoting a democratic political culture (Diamond 1997).

Diamond provides the most comprehensive checklist, which attributes the following functions to civil society:

> it limits, controls and monitors state power on the one hand, and on the other hand, it complements and improves the state by enhancing its democratic legitimacy and effectiveness;
>
> it stimulates political participation and promotes democratic skills amongst the population;
>
> it helps to promote a democratic political culture;
>
> it may structure multiple channels, beyond parties, for articulating, aggregating and representing interests;
>
> it helps to effect 'a transition from clientelism to citizenship' at the local level;
>
> it can generate a wide range of cross-cutting interests thereby reducing political polarity;
>
> it recruits and trains new political leaders;
>
> it can carry out other functions such as election monitoring;
>
> it disseminates information;
>
> it helps to achieve economic reform in new democracies by disseminating information and neutralising resistance to economic reforms;
>
> it offers services and develops techniques of conflict mediation and resolution;
>
> it strengthens community initiatives thereby relieving the burden on the state. (1997:29–42)

Critique

The fact that some academics chose to talk about social movements whilst others preferred to talk about civil society in the context of democratisation processes was not just a question of academic taste, nor was it the case that different concepts were simply more appropriate to distinguish between the discrete stages of democratisation processes; rather these competing visions of civil society are symptomatic of the normative ambiguity inherent within the concept. In short, the kind of active and mobilised civil society seen as appropriate to challenging authoritarianism and establishing democracy is not regarded as the kind of civil society best suited to preserving the stability of democracy once the latter has been established. Theorists stress the importance of collective actors within civil society in bringing down authoritarianism, yet once the establishment of a liberal democratic regime is in sight, the need for these collective actors to restrain their activities in order to avoid destabilising democracy becomes paramount.

Foley and Edwards highlight these two broad versions of the civil society argument. One argument emphasises 'civil society as a sphere of action that is independent of the state and that is capable – precisely for this reason – of energising resistance to a tyrannical regime' (1996:39). This is then contrasted with another civil society argument which is related to the functions of civil society in regard to maintaining democracy and is to be found in the theories of Tocqueville, a nineteenth-century French politician and writer, and more recently updated by Putnam's study on civic traditions in Italy (Putnam 1993). This particular civil society argument emphasises 'the ability of associational life in general and the habits of associationalism in particular to foster patterns of civility in the actions of citizens in a democratic polity' (Foley and Edwards 1996:39).

However, it is not just that there may be two competing versions of civil society depending either on what is being explained or on different normative visions of democracy: it is also the case that civil society contains *within* it an inherent tension. Civil society encapsulates both democratic and liberal norms. The former stress the importance of civil society as an arena of *collective* agency within associations and social movements and a space, not just where certain interests are represented, but also where concepts of the common good can be realised. The latter stress the importance of civil society as a framework conducive to the *individual* pursuit of

self-interest, free from state or other individuals' interference. This normative ambiguity, which arises from the fact that civil society contains within it both democratic as well as liberal norms, explains both the past and the present popularity of civil society as a concept, as well as the difficulties inherent in its usage.

In addition to this normative ambiguity, confusion also arose as a result of the context within which civil society regained popularity, namely the struggles in Latin America and Eastern Europe to revitalise a weak and atomised society in the face of a pervasive authoritarian state. This induced a tendency to strip civil society of its critical edge and to view it as inherently positive, with the result that debate has often centred on a dichotomy between a 'good' civil society and a 'bad' state with both locked into a zero-sum position. This tendency was exacerbated by the perceived bankruptcy of Marxism, following in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes of Eastern Europe and against the backdrop of the perceived failure of Keynesian welfare-state policies in the west. It was not fortuitous that the new-found popularity of civil society coincided with the collapse of faith in Marxism and other metanarratives as either explanatory tools or strategic courses of action. The increased popularity of civil society was, in part, a response to the perceived failure of the socialist alternative in both east and west. As such it was part of a common endeavour by many who wished to deepen and extend liberal democracy, whilst trying to learn the lessons from the collapse of Soviet communism and the contradictions of the bureaucratic welfare state in advanced capitalist societies in the west. Accordingly, those traditionally on the left of the political spectrum have taken on board many classical liberal preoccupations in order to correct past inattention to the diversity and plurality of interests within civil society on the one hand, and the need to check and hold accountable state power on the other.

The increased stress on pluralism can be seen in the popularity amongst today's theorists of both Hegel's and Gramsci's concept of civil society, both of which are in marked contrast to the perceived reductionism of Marx's concept of civil society, as well as in the retrieval of theorists such as Tocqueville. Baker points out that although Tocqueville hardly used the term civil society, he has gained in popularity amongst civil society theorists because of his emphasis on the need for a strong associational fabric as a bulwark against the state (Baker 1998:82).

The new stress on pluralism is also indicative of the current rejection of the determinacy of class. Amongst other factors such as race, sexuality and gender, all of which have their role to play in defining people's identities, their interests, and the oppression they may suffer, class is no longer accorded any special determinacy. In this way, civil society has become the site of diversity and plurality, rather than the site of social and economic inequalities.

What also stands out in most contemporary accounts of civil society by key theorists such as Habermas (1989a, 1989b, 1996) and Cohen and Arato (1994) is that they depend on the liberal separation of state and society. Today's theorists uphold the liberal assumption of the need to maintain the distinction between the public and private realms, and their shared concern is to prevent the encroachment of one domain onto another. This idealised separation is regarded as essential in order for each sphere to function adequately and for the adequate functioning of the polity as a whole.

> Civil society is therefore about maintaining the boundaries between state and civil society as a basic structural pre-condition for democracy, whilst at once reinvigorating (usually through the agency of 'new' social movements) the public sphere in accordance with the politics of deepening democracy. (Baker 1998:84)

This renewed and invigorated faith in the liberal separation of spheres, however, is not without its consequences. First, it results in a tendency to present civil society as an idealised sphere, free from power relations, whose borders can, and should, be defended against the encroachment of the state and the economy. However, such an account, based on the ideal separation of spheres rather than their mutual interdependence, fails to adequately conceptualise the nature and extent of the interactions between these realms as well as the power relations that are as much constitutive of civil society as they are of the state and the economy.

Second, the liberal supposition of the autonomy of the political sphere also has consequences for any democratic project which hopes to increase participation and extend democracy beyond the narrow confines of the political sphere. Pateman notes that extending democracy to the workplace is not an option for liberal theorists because democracy 'is held to be a purely political concept

and practice and can, therefore, have no place in the private sphere of social life' (1979:132). In other words, one of the key structural constraints to deepening and extending democracy in a liberal democratic context is the liberal separation of spheres which serves to insulate certain power relations – particularly patriarchal and economic ones – from democratic control. Wood argues that in this way liberal democracy can happily coexist with capitalism and other relations of domination because political equality leaves intact other spheres of power and inequalities (1995:224). Private spheres, whether relating to the economic market or to the domestic household, are not considered to be appropriate spheres for governmental action in the same way, or to the same extent, that the public sphere is. This serves to obscure relations of power and domination in these diverse spheres and to place them beyond the scope of political action.

The idealised separation of spheres also makes it difficult to conceptualise the relationship of civil society with other elements such as the state and the market. Most authors clearly differentiate civil society from both the state apparatus and the intimate sphere of the family by defining civil society as an intermediate sphere between the state and the private realm of the family, in which citizens associate voluntarily and organise independently to manage their own affairs. Yet, whilst civil society certainly does not include the state, it does presuppose its existence. Kumar points to the interdependent relationship of state and civil society. He writes:

> Society was shown to have its own organisations, its own principles, that gave it a life independent of that conferred by grace of the sovereign. But it was not thereby – except in the anarchist tradition – regarded as necessarily capable of ruling and regulating itself. Indeed the stronger and more varied its structures, the more in need it seemed to be of ordering and regulation by the state. (1994:130)

Problems also arise when it comes to conceptualising the relationship of the market to civil society. Although in the broader Hegelian and Gramscian sense, civil society can contain a good deal more than the market economy, it is vital to keep in mind that the market economy forms the basis of civil society. Failure to do so results in the weakening of civil society as an analytical and normative concept because it again runs the risk of presenting an 'idealised'

picture of civil society. Wood argues that in much of the current literature on civil society, the concept renders capitalism invisible because it is indiscriminately used to refer to everything from households and voluntary associations to economic firms. In this sense, she argues, 'the totalising logic and the coercive power of capitalism become invisible when the whole social system of capitalism is reduced to one set of institutions and relations among many others, on a conceptual par with households or voluntary associations' (1995:255).

Without keeping in sight the socio-economic context within which civil society is embedded, it is impossible to understand civil society for what it is: the site of a whole range of inequalities separate from the formal equality which characterises the political realm. Indeed, it is precisely this separation which makes liberal democracy possible. Thus, what is held aloft as the main virtue of liberal democracy, that is to say the separation of socio-economic inequalities from formal political equality, ignores that civil society is systematically divided along lines of class, race and sex (Blakeley 1998:188).

The continuing validity of civil society

Despite the above difficulties, civil society can still be an important conceptual tool if the following points are taken into account. First, civil society allows us to combine theory with empiricism because, as Hall points out, it is 'at one and the same time a social value and a set of social institutions' (Hall 1995:2). This is the distinction which Pearce makes between 'the normative discourses on "civil society"' on the one hand, and on the other hand 'the empirically researchable "civil society"' (1996:141). This is why civil society is so useful: it can be used both as a tool for analysing political change by situating it within a definite historical period and specific social context, and as an important normative concept for political critique. It is possible, though not uncomplicated, to combine an awareness of the normative dimensions implicit within the concept of civil society itself with an empirical analysis of a specific civil society within a given social and historical context. It is thus important to avoid the abstract framework of analysis indicative of some of the literature on civil society, which all too often seems far removed from the practice of daily life. If we require theory to help to change practice, rather than simply describe it, a more historically

and contextually specific analysis, which also identifies and accounts for political agency, is required. A good understanding of civil society, in its theoretical normative dimensions as well as in its empirical form, can help us to understand the possibilities and limitations which people face when they attempt to form associations and participate collectively within the sphere of civil society.

Second, using civil society as a conceptual resource does not imply privileging civil society over other elements such as the market, the state or political parties. Rather, the use of civil society as a basis for understanding processes of political change necessitates a clarification of its relationship with these other elements. It is the interaction and relationship between these different elements which is crucial to understanding processes of political change. Rather than the picture of a harmonious whole with each separate sphere allotted a particular function, which the liberal emphasis on boundary maintenance often presents, we need to examine the often conflictive and contradictory nature of these interactions. This includes, for example, attention to the position occupied by political parties within a democratic polity. As an expression of both state and civil society, political parties can be described as 'crucial mediating mechanisms' between the two discrete spheres (Rueschemeyer *et al.* 1992:287). It is equally important to highlight the mutual interdependence of state and civil society. This requires that we pay attention to institutional design as well as to the nature of civil society. In other words, what kind of state can facilitate a democratic civil society? What kind of civil society can encourage a democratic and responsive state?

Third, the liberal separation of spheres, whilst problematic, as Marxist and feminist theorists have pointed out, is crucial to our understanding of civil society's role in democratisation processes because it is one of the key structural delimiters of both the possibilities and constraints for any project of deepening liberal democracy. Fraser (1992) argues that rather than accepting this liberal separation as pre-given, we need to acknowledge that where the dividing line between public and private is drawn, and who draws it, reflects particular configurations of power and norms that can be contested, not pre-given interests which are regarded as immutable. The drawing of the public/private distinction is therefore something to be struggled over. Certainly the public/private divide is not fixed, as we saw in the last century by the struggles of the labour movement and the feminist movement in particular. The

former has succeeded in making issues such as health and safety at work matters of public concern, whilst the latter has succeeded in placing domestic violence on the public agenda. Benhabib argues: 'All struggles against oppression in the modern world begin by redefining what had previously been considered private, non-public and non-political issues as matters of public concern, as issues of justice, as sites of power' (1992:84).

The key sphere where these struggles take place is civil society. We can thus examine the extent to which collective agency in civil society permits the redefining of what is public/private, and ultimately, what is political. Yet, as Gramsci highlights via the concept of hegemony, civil society is not just the site of agency – a 'zone of contestation' (Adamson 1987/88:332) – where collective actors struggle to define the political, it is also the site of structural inequalities which may constrain some actors whilst enabling others. Thus, the fact that the public/private distinction is constitutive of civil society also denotes one of the key structural limitations to attempts to contest this distinction and, as such, has important consequences for any emancipatory democratic project. According to Wood: 'In capitalism, a great deal can happen in politics and community organisation at every level without fundamentally affecting the exploitative powers of capital or fundamentally changing the decisive balance of class power' (1995:275).

Yet this does not mean to say that such struggles are meaningless. Wood continues:

> Struggles in these arenas remain vitally important, but they have to be organised and conducted in the full recognition that capitalism has a remarkable capacity to distance democratic politics from the decisive centres of social power and to insulate the power of appropriation and exploitation from democratic accountability. (1995:275)

The public/private distinction is thus crucial to our understanding of civil society and its role within democratisation processes. The reach of democratisation depends upon the extent to which the public/private dichotomy can be contested and the extent to which the dividing line between public and private realms can be constantly renegotiated.

Conclusion

This chapter has pointed out the two key competing ways in which civil society has been used within the context of democratisation, firstly as a 'zone of contestation' capable of bringing down authoritarianism and secondly as a zone of protection more suited to safeguarding the stability of democracy. These competing perspectives are connected to the normative ambiguity inherent in the term and the problematic public/private distinction upon which the concept rests. Finally, this chapter has argued that civil society is still a useful conceptual resource to aid our understanding of political processes and of political change, for three key reasons.

First, whilst the concept of civil society does contain ambiguous normative ideals, the risk of confusion and abstract theorising can be avoided if the normative concept of civil society is grounded in a specific historical and social context. Second, an attention to civil society requires an examination of the complex, and often conflictive, relationship between civil society, the market, the state and political parties, which avoids presenting these spheres as independent elements of some harmonious whole. Finally, an examination of civil society, both normatively and empirically, demands that we think critically about the public/private distinction, bearing in mind that whilst civil society is the sphere in which this distinction can be contested, this distinction is also constitutive of civil society and as such represents one of the key structural limitations to deepening democracy within a liberal democratic context. In other words, to avoid the rather sterile conclusion that nothing short of a revolution will suffice if we wish to successfully deepen and extend democratic spaces within a liberal, capitalist framework, it is necessary to combine a Gramscian faith in agency – civil society as a 'zone of contestation' – with a Marxist/feminist recognition of the structural inequalities that are constitutive of civil society.

Guide to further reading

Good guides to the intellectual history of the concept of civil society can be found in Keane (1988), Kumar (1993), Pearce (1996, 1997) and White (1994, 1995). The articles by White and Pearce are also useful in combining theory and empiricism. A special issue of the journal *Democratization* (1997, Vol. 4, No. 1) is dedicated to the concept of civil society and contains a useful bibliography. Given

the link between civil society and the idea of good governance, it is also useful to consult web sites such as those of the IMF, World Bank and OECD.

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6
Gender

Valerie Bryson

Academic political analysts and other political commentators are now more likely to show 'gender awareness' or to include a 'gender perspective' than in the recent past, and some are developing increasingly sophisticated analyses of gender. This new awareness, which owes much to feminism, is increasingly likely to include men and masculinity as well as women. This chapter welcomes the increased attention to gender issues, and argues that approaches which ignore gender are inevitably partial and impoverished. However, it also finds that the concept of gender is frequently used carelessly and inappropriately. In particular, it warns against replacing the feminist concept of patriarchy with that of gender; it also argues that the analysis of gender should not be abstracted from its socio-economic context and that it should not become a substitute for the analysis of class inequality and exploitation.

Gender is not a concept that has traditionally been employed by political theorists, commentators or politicians. However, the closing decades of the twentieth century saw an upsurge of interest in the theoretical analysis of gender, mainly inspired by feminism. This has led to the development of some highly sophisticated theory, which continues to evolve and which challenges both the boundaries and the conventions of traditional political thought and the meaning of our identity as women or men. At this level, the very word 'gender' is itself deeply contested and loaded with theoretical significance. At the same time, the term now has quite widespread currency in much 'malestream' academic work and in public political debate.

This new awareness owes much to feminism; however, it tends to use the term in a very descriptive way or as a shorthand for women, and most public discussion of gender fails to recognise the complexity of the issues involved.

In assessing the value of 'gender' as a political concept, it seems important to distinguish between the self-conscious reflections of theorists and the more casual use of the concept by political commentators and politicians. I will, however, argue that at both levels the concept has the potential for enhancing our understanding of the world, and that at both levels it must also be handled with great care if it is not to lose its radical edge and obscure more than it reveals.

History: the distinction between sex and gender

> In feminist theory, gender, unlike sex, is defined as a *socially constructed role,* which means that it is the result of political arrangements and is amenable to social and political analysis. (Tobias 1997:1; emphasis in the original)
>
> [Gender roles are] ... those learned social roles that a culture chooses to derive from its understanding of the nature of biological reproduction. (Rinehart 1992:15)
>
> [Gender studies are] ... investigations into the ways that sex and sexuality become power relations in our society. (Carver 1996:1)

At least since the seventeenth century, some feminist writers have argued that what appears to be women's nature is in fact the artificial and distorted product of their upbringing. In the celebrated words of the French writer Simone de Beauvoir, written in 1949, 'One is not born but rather becomes a woman' (1972:297). From the 1960s, this argument was often formalised in what has become known as the sex/gender distinction. According to this, *sex* is about the biological characteristics of males and females, particularly those involved in reproduction; this is quite distinct from *gender*, which refers to the socially produced attributes of masculinity and femininity, and the social roles and arrangements based upon them. From this perspective, women's ability to give birth is a natural product of biological sex, but their ability to change a nappy or their love of shopping is learned gender behaviour; similarly, the sex attributes of men mean that they are generally taller and stronger than women, but cannot explain why they dominate positions of political power or why their

mechanical ability has traditionally deserted them at the sight of a washing machine.

This sex/gender distinction has been empowering for many women, for it makes it possible to argue that current gender differences and inequalities are not fixed by nature, and that women's bodies do not limit their ability to reason or justify their exclusion from the rights and roles held by men. It has enabled feminists to argue that women should have access to the same opportunities as men, free from the artificial restrictions of what the pioneering United States feminist Betty Friedan labelled in 1963 'the feminine mystique' (Friedan 1986, book title). This kind of analysis has directly inspired many feminist campaigns for equal social, political and economic rights, and is often described as 'liberal feminism'.

More radical feminists have argued that gender is not simply about individual attributes and opportunities, but is also a basic principle of social organisation and the power of men over women, so that gender *differences* inevitably mean gender *subordination* for women. Here, the term *patriarchy* is often used as a shorthand for a social system based on male domination. The classic radical feminist theory of patriarchy was set out by Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* in 1970.

> Millett argued that in all known societies, the relationship between the sexes has been based on men's power over women: it is therefore political. Men's power, she says, goes deeper than the power based on class or race, and it is so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears 'natural' and, until named by feminists, invisible. It is maintained by a process of socialisation which begins in the family and is reinforced by education, literature and religion; it also rests upon economic exploitation, state power and, ultimately, force (particularly sexual violence and rape). (Bryson 1999a:27)

Marxist and socialist feminists have always looked beyond the individualistic assumptions of liberal feminism, and many have recognised the existence and importance of patriarchy. However, many have also insisted that patriarchal oppression is less fundamental than oppression based on class; during the 1970s and 1980s there was much feminist debate over 'hierarchies of oppression' and the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism (see Sargent 1986; and, for an overview, Bryson 1992). In recent years, black feminism has helped reveal the narrow perspective of many white

feminists, and has argued for the essential interconnectedness of gender with different forms of oppression (see in particular Collins 1990).

Most of the early work on the constraints of gender focussed on women and the ways in which the imposition of feminine qualities at best curtailed their potential as human beings or at worst ensured their continued oppression by men. Much less attention was paid to men, and masculinity tended to be treated as the unquestioned standard of what it is to be human. In principle, however, the sex/gender distinction could throw masculinity open to scrutiny as well, and recent years have seen the development of studies in this area.

As discussed in the next section, the belief that the gender attributes of men as well as women can be changed is also linked to the development of ideas about the essential fluidity and precariousness of gender identity. These have led some writers to argue that there is no necessary connection between sexed bodies and gender identities and that the interaction of biological sex and sexual orientation with other attributes and modes of behaviour throws up a multiplicity of genders, rather than a simple male/female or masculine/feminine dichotomy (see Carver 1996). Other writers go further and use postmodernist philosophy (see Chapter 3) to argue that sex itself is a product of society rather than fixed by nature.

Meanwhile, there appears to have been a steady growth in public awareness of the political importance of gender issues. In many nations of the world, government statistics now routinely contrast the situation of women with that of men and these findings are widely discussed in the media and by politicians. However, this has not been accompanied by any significantly greater understanding of the complexity of gender, and public debate has generally ignored feminist analyses of the sex/gender distinction and its link with patriarchy, and black and socialist feminist analyses of the interaction of gender with other forms of oppression. Instead, public discussion has tended to equate gender with any recognition of differences between women and men or to treat it as a more 'polite' term than sex (much as some people use 'lady dog' as a euphemism for 'bitch'). Until recently, public debate has also tended to assume that somehow only women have gender. This means that 'gender research' is interpreted as 'research on women', 'adding a gender dimension' means 'including women' and 'breaking down statistics by gender' means seeing how women compare with men.

Current status

The sex/gender distinction under attack

> What does it mean to say that the existence of two sexes is an 'irreducible fact'? ... this 'irreducible fact' is a product of social interaction in everyday life. (Kessler and McKenna 1978, quoted in Crawford 2000:7)

> Sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along. (Butler 1990:8)

The basic sex/gender distinction is still important for many feminist campaigners. However, it could only ever represent the beginnings of a debate, rather than its conclusion, as it leaves wide open the question of which of the observable differences between men and women are based on biology, and which are socially produced and therefore amenable to change. Its use today also has a decidedly old-fashioned feel for, as the following sections show, the distinction has been challenged at both practical and deeper theoretical levels, and the analysis of gender has taken off in a number of distinct directions.

Conservative writers have often simply ignored feminist attempts to distinguish between sex and gender. However, some anti-feminists have recently directly contested the use of the term gender: at the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, conservative delegates wanted the resulting Platform of Action to replace the term 'gender' with 'sex' precisely because the latter recognised what they saw as innate, genetically programmed differences between women and men, while the former implied a dangerous level of fluidity and variability (Baden and Goetz 1997).

The anti-feminist insistence on the naturalness and inevitability of a wide range of differences in the behaviour and roles of women and men is shared by some radical 'difference feminists'. Rather than seeing women's difference from men as a sign of female inferiority, this approach argues that women are superior, and that differences in hormones, brain structure and psychology as well as reproduction give rise to positive 'womanly qualities', such as care, co-operation and conflict resolution, which are in opposition to the negative, destructive values of patriarchal society (for a critical discussion, see Segal 1987).

Such essentialist ideas attack the sex/gender distinction by rejecting its denial of the social significance of biological differences between the sexes. The sex/gender distinction has also been rejected by those who argue that there is in fact no stable biological basis for classifying people by sex. Here it is claimed that the basis for a binary division between women and men does not exist, and that the common-sense arguments behind the division collapse on examination: thus many of those we call 'women' lack the capacity to give birth, many are sexually attracted to other women, some feel that they are 'really' men despite their female bodies, and a few have indeterminate sexual organs or male chromosomes. This suggests that sex takes the form of a continuum rather than a dichotomous division (see Crawford 2000 and the discussion in Bryson 1999a, Chapter 2).

Such rejection of binary oppositions is a central feature of postmodern thought (see Chapter 3, this volume). A number of writers have also used postmodernism to argue not only that sex cannot be understood in terms of a simple dualism but also that, like gender, sex itself is socially and discursively constructed rather than self-evidently and naturally given. Here it is claimed that biological sexual differences only acquire significance because they are identified and labelled by society. In other words, society creates the categories of 'man' and 'woman' by making us aware of and attaching importance to particular features of our anatomy (in much the same way as skin pigmentation is not inherently politically or socially significant, but is made so in some societies). Sex, from this perspective, is a category of meaning, rather than a naturally given 'fact', and a central task for many feminists has become to unravel the complex cultural and symbolic ways in which sex as well as gender is constructed.

Postmodernism's rejection of the idea that gender can be understood in terms of the dichotomous opposition of masculinity and femininity, or that these bear any fixed or necessary relationship to biology, means that any attributes of masculinity or femininity are essentially arbitrary, and that gender identity is always inherently precarious and liable to disruption. This has led Judith Butler to claim that because the maintenance of gender identity can never be taken for granted or internalised, it must constantly be reaffirmed by gender-appropriate behaviour. From this perspective, gender is not something that one *is* but something that one *does* (Butler 1990). This idea of 'gender as performance' also ties in with

'queer theory' and suggests that oppressive structures of gender and sexuality can be challenged by transgressive forms of behaviour, such as transvestism, which deliberately cross gender lines and flout expectations of gender-appropriate behaviour. This opens up the possibility of a society in which gender identities could be fluid, freely chosen and multiple rather than the stable core of our identity (for critical discussion, see Segal 1999, Chapter 2).

Gender plurality and other dimensions of power

> Gender binaries never exist in pristine form. Women and men are always already inserted in contexts of race, class, age, sexual orientation and multiple other belongings: each with their deeply entrenched connections to power and authority, or the lack of it. (Segal 1999:42)

As discussed in Chapter 3 of this volume, many of postmodernism's critics have argued that it loses sight of the extent to which gender differences (like those of class or 'race') involve the collective experience of real oppression and exploitation. However, its stress on 'difference' does provide a useful warning against simplistic generalisations about the experiences or attributes of 'women' or 'men' and enables us to see that, far from being fixed and unitary, the meaning of gender is highly variable both over time and amongst different groups within the same society.

Recent black feminist thought also rejects a simplistic two-gender model of society, arguing that white women have generalised from their own situation, ignoring other experiences of gender and the complex ways in which gender interacts with other forms of oppression (see Collins 1990; Mirza 1997). Thus, while white feminists in the west have long struggled against feminine stereotypes which portrayed them as frail, passive and sexually innocent, they forgot that such attributes were never applied to black slave or colonial subject women, who were seen as physically strong and sexually promiscuous, and whose very portrayal and treatment made possible the contrasting construction of white femininity. At the same time, male slaves were doubly humiliated. Not only were they denied freedom as human beings, but they were excluded from the rights attached to white masculinity, including sexual rights over women, while racial stereotypes nurtured a fear of black male

sexuality which was used both to inflame racial hatred and to justify restrictions on the freedom of white women.

Similar stereotypes remain powerful today, and mean that experiences of gender do not simply vary with ethnicity or 'race', but that ethnicity is itself a gendered social category which can play an important role in controlling sexuality and sexual behaviour (Brah 1993; Liu 1994; and see Chapter 7, this volume). All this suggests that gender cannot be understood in isolation, and today black feminism's analysis of gender, 'race' and class as three key interactive dimensions of inequality and oppression has become increasingly accepted by many white feminists (see the discussion in Bryson 1999a, Chapters 2 and 3).

These conclusions are shared by many socialist feminists, for whom gender equality is not about career opportunities or the psychic and symbolic dimensions of identity, but about the material needs of the most disadvantaged women. Although socialist feminism is now less influential than in the relatively recent past, its rejection of the individualistic assumptions of liberal, equal-rights feminism remains important today (see Bryson 1999a, Chapter 2), as does its critique of postmodernism.

Lynne Segal, a major British writer who continues to describe herself as a socialist feminist, rejects crude economic determinism and recognises the multidimensional nature of social identities. However, she insists that the interrelations of 'gender', 'class' and 'race' must be understood in the context of economic exploitation and '... the currently *ever more* totalizing control of a transnational capitalist market' (Segal 1999:34; emphasis in the original). This kind of approach both recognises the importance of patriarchy as a major dimension of structured inequality and argues that it is not a system in the same sense as capitalist class society, for patriarchy does not have an internal dynamic that is equivalent to the capitalist pursuit of profit (see Bryson 1999b; Pollert 1996). From this perspective, men's oppression of women is not the product of abstract necessity in the same kind of way as capitalism's exploitation of wage labour; to treat class and patriarchy as separate or equivalent systems of oppression is, therefore, to attribute to the latter inappropriate explanatory powers. Ellen Meiksins Wood has further argued that, although gender inequality, like racial inequality, can be useful to capitalism, unlike class, it is not actually necessary to capitalism and can at times be undermined by it. However, as discussed in the next section, practical attempts to challenge gender oppression and

traditional gender roles almost inevitably also involve a challenge to the domination of market forces.

The analysis of men and masculinities

In the past, debate on gender issues focussed almost exclusively on women and girls. However, recent years have seen rising public concern about the situation of boys and men (see Connell 2000, Chapter 1). In the west, there is much talk of a 'crisis of masculinity', and many commentators are concerned about men's perceived lack of success in the employment market, the failure of boys to match the educational achievements of girls, the involvement of young men in crime and drug abuse, the increase in the number of families with no live-in father and the rise in male suicide. This discussion is often accompanied by a sense that the crisis has somehow been caused by feminism, and that it could be resolved by a return to an earlier, natural gender order in which gender roles were clearly defined and men had a positive place in society.

At a more academic level, recent years have seen a rapid growth in work on men and masculinities, which 'names men as men' rather than treating them as the unquestioned measure of what it means to be human (see Carver 1996; Connell 1995, 2000; Segal 1990; and, for overviews, Squires 1999; Bryson 1999a). Many writers now argue both that masculinity, like femininity, may be socially constructed and that, as factors such as age, class, race, sexual orientation and (dis)ability interact to affect the meaning of what it is to be a man, gender has multiple rather than dualistic meanings for men as well as women. This means that there may be a number of different and competing models of masculinity in society at any one time. The different models are, however, neither equally freely available to all nor equally valued. Rather, they can act both as sources of power and as means of control, and dominant models of masculinity may be experienced as oppressive by many men. Thus in western societies today, the hegemonic ideal of the high-earning, strong, confident, sexually experienced heterosexual is one which many men cannot possibly achieve. It is also one which may have deeply antisocial consequences, as some men compensate for their failures with an exaggerated assertion of the aggression of 'normal' masculinity. Here, the British feminist Beatrix Campbell has argued that the violent and criminal behaviour of some young men is a specifically male response to deprivation and lack of opportunities which reflects the same model of masculinity as that displayed by

the 'rowdy louts' who shout insults across the floor of the House of Commons (Campbell 1993:313; see also Segal 1990). Although this analysis argues that dominant forms of masculinity can be deeply damaging to society, it does not claim that such masculinity is an inevitable attribute of all men. Rather, it stresses the artificial nature of masculinity and the importance of encouraging more positive models.

Critical discussion

The increased public awareness of gender issues

Even today, both the academic study and the practice of politics remain paradigmatically male, with 'women politicians' and 'women's issues' seen as subsets of 'normal' politicians and priorities. In this context, any public discussion of gender can seem positive, even if it only means including women and their concerns on a more equal basis, or recognising the political relevance of differences and inequalities between women and men. Such debate can, however, also serve conservative ends and militate against radical action for change.

Most public discussion of gender ignores its socio-economic context and the ways in which it interconnects with other forms of oppression. This means that a narrow focus on gender issues can distract public attention from more vital political concerns. For example, the sexual behaviour of Bill Clinton while President of the United States attracted far more discussion than any of his domestic or foreign policies. Although, as radical feminists have argued, 'private' sexual behaviour can both reflect and sustain women's public and domestic subordination, media coverage was clearly determined more by public prurience than by a wish to challenge gender oppression, and neither the positive nor the negative impact of his welfare or foreign policies on women received much attention. As the British journalist Mark Steel commented: 'Clinton's behaviour towards the women he seduces is atrocious. Though not as bad as towards those he's starved, jailed, impoverished and bombed' (Steel 1998).

Concern with inequalities between women and men also all too often becomes a politically safe substitute for the analysis of class, capitalist exploitation and 'race', in a world in which any public discussion of 'race' or ethnicity is a political minefield and talk of

class and capitalism is embarrassingly old-fashioned. For example, in the mid-1990s the British Labour Party took positive steps to increase the number of women Labour Members of Parliament, but it has not even discussed whether it should address the declining representation of working-class people, and it has refused to set up Black Sections in the party on the same basis as Women's Sections. In its coverage of the British 2001 general election, the broadsheet newspapers contained a number of articles of the 'where are the women?' variety, but paid much less attention to the lack of minority ethnic candidates and virtually ignored class issues (see Golding 2001).

A narrow focus on gender inequalities is in tune with the kind of liberal reformist feminism that sees the goal as equal opportunities for career-minded women rather than a more egalitarian society. As the debate on gender enters the mainstream, it also frequently becomes descriptive rather than analytical, losing sight of the radical analysis of the oppressive nature of gender differences, so that gender becomes 'an interesting statistical variable' rather than an analysis of power relations (see Baden and Goetz 1997). The result is effectively a *gender-neutral discussion of gender*, which fails to relate particular differences between men and women to the context of a world in which political, economic and cultural power and resources remain strikingly skewed in men's favour. At the most basic level, it is men who largely control the world's resources, while hunger and poverty are disproportionately experienced by women; indeed, the effects of sex-selective abortion and infanticide and lower levels of nutrition and healthcare mean that around 100 million women are missing from the world's population (Segal 1999:72; see also Waylen 1998; Carver 1996, 1998; Radtke and Stam 1995).

Sex, gender and collective action

As discussed earlier, public debate on gender has largely ignored feminist analysis of the sex/gender distinction, treating gender as 'loosely synonymous with "sex" and lazily synonymous with "women"' (Carver 1998:18). Despite its limitations, the sex/gender distinction remains an important tool for women seeking to challenge traditional roles and expectations or to defend recent gains in an era of anti-feminist backlash. It also enables us to disentangle gendered behaviour and expectations from the actions and attributes of individual women and men. For example, if female politicians or senior managers act in much the same way as their male counter-

parts, this does not mean that gender has no effect; rather, it may mean that, if women are to be successful, they must conform to the same norms of hegemonic masculinity as successful men. This means that challenging political and workplace inequalities between men and women involves questioning these gendered norms, rather than simply selecting more women for senior positions.

Analysis of the ways in which gender is constructed can also help us to see that while violence, whether in the home, on the streets or between nations, is disproportionately carried out by men, it is not an inevitable product of male biology. Writers such as Cynthia Cockburn are developing sophisticated ideas which can help us to explore the complex ways in which gender, national and ethnic identities are formed, and the ways that analysis of this can help our understanding of nationalism and armed conflict (see for example Cockburn 1998, 1999; Lutz *et al*. 1995). Here, a gender perspective on armed conflict does not just point out that men and women have different roles and experiences or start recognising rape as a war crime (although it can do this). Rather, it enables us to see the ways in which gender roles often become more rigid at times of ethnic tension or in the build-up to war. Such rigidity can represent an early warning sign of impending conflict: in such a situation, there is little place for 'softer', non-aggressive forms of masculinity and there is much less tolerance for women who step out of line. In this context, opposition to war can become bound up with defying traditional gender roles; here it is perhaps no coincidence that western opposition to United States involvement in Vietnam was linked to a rejection of traditional masculine appearance in favour of long hair, kaftans and beads.

Cockburn's work is grounded in a socialist feminist analysis of patriarchy which argues both that women are systematically disadvantaged in comparison with men and that gender interacts with other power structures. This kind of approach enables us to identify both common interests and differences amongst women. As such, it has affinities with the concept of 'solidarity' suggested by the black American feminist bell hooks, who builds upon the claim that different forms of oppression are interconnected, and that they reinforce each other, to argue that members of different oppressed groups can have a shared interest in social change. From this perspective, the struggles of all women are interconnected, although they are not all the same. This means that different groups of women can support each other without insisting that their situation is

identical; it also makes it possible for women to form alliances with oppressed groups of men (hooks 1984, 2000). It may also at times make political sense to endorse what Baden and Goetz describe as 'strategic sisterhood' when women as a group are under attack (Baden and Goetz 1997), and to unite with other women *as women*, for as Judith Squires has argued:

> [A] historically specific *we* of political identity and alliance is liberatory in a way in which a group identity imposed by oppressive power relations is not. Distinguishing between the two, and creating spaces for the former, is the vital role of gender in political theory. It keeps us continually aware of the contingency of claims to group sameness and mindful of the power relations which produced the conditions of identity. (Squires 1999:73)

Such analysis can provide the basis for collective political actions which allow us to accept some of the postmodernist concerns around 'difference' without losing sight of the significance of shared experiences. A less obviously political solution is offered by those writers who have argued that 'transgressive behaviour' which violates conventional gender norms, particularly those around sexuality, can unlock the constraints of gender and allow the free and fluid expression of our identities. Such transgression may have significant liberatory effects which go well beyond the individuals involved. However, as with attempts to analyse and contest the complex ways in which gender is linguistically and culturally constructed, this approach fails to explore the socio-economic bases of gender behaviour and to see the ways in which the possibilities of gender transformation are limited by the vested interests of privileged groups and the realities of poverty and exploitation.

Men and masculinity

The recognition that men as well as women have a gender identity and that this can be challenged can represent a progressive challenge to the 'normality' of men as the standard against which women are inevitably measured. This enables us to see that meaningful gender equality will not be achieved simply by extending the rights and privileges of men to women and enabling women to behave like men. Rather, it involves profound challenges to male attributes and behaviour and to the whole social structure in which these are sustained. For example, genuine equality of opportunity between

women and men in the workplace would require a major restructuring of paid work to enable male workers to undertake their share of domestic responsibilities and/or extensive state support for childcare and other socially important domestic work. Neither of these is likely to be produced by market forces, particularly in the context of a globalised economy characterised by a 'race to the bottom' in terms of competitive conditions of employment (see Chapter 1, this volume).

It is important to recognise the ways in which many men are damaged by dominant expectations of masculine behaviour or confused by feminist challenges to these. Today, it is not only women who are expected to juggle the often conflicting demands of family responsibilities and employment at the same time as remaining sexually attractive and attentive; as a '... diversity of "masculinities" jostle to present themselves as the acceptable face of the new male order' (Segal 1990:293), many men can feel that they are expected to be both equal partner and primary breadwinner; emotionally understanding and sexually exciting; sensitive and masterful; and caring and strong. Such conflicting demands can be emotionally damaging to individual men and their partners; as discussed in the previous section, they can also have damaging effects on society as a whole, as some men take refuge in a reaffirmation of the most negative aspects of traditional masculine behaviour.

However, a narrow focus on the problems and disadvantages experienced by some men can again divert attention from other dimensions of inequality and oppression. For example, the educational underperformance of boys has become a matter of political concern in a number of western nations (see Connell 2000). Although the existence of a sizeable group of young men without the qualifications or skills that are relevant in today's labour market is a significant social problem, this is often a problem of class and ethnicity as much as gender, as male underachievement is heavily concentrated amongst boys from low socio-economic and/or minority ethnic backgrounds, while boys from privileged backgrounds continue to do well (Segal 1999:162). Indeed, in Britain at least, the overall academic performance of boys continues to rise, so that the gender gap in achievement is a product of a more rapid improvement by girls rather than a general failure on the part of boys.

The idea that female success is a problem for boys and men is related to the more general danger that discussion of masculinity all too often involves what Diane Bell and Renate Klein have described as 'phallic drift': 'The powerful tendency for public discussion of

gender issues to drift, inexorably, back to the male point of view' (Bell and Klein 1996:561). As such, a focus on masculinity can reflect patriarchal prioritising of male interests which loses sight of the wider power structures within which masculinities are experienced, and forgets that, as Robert Connell, a leading writer on men and masculinity, has recently argued: 'The main axis of power in the contemporary European/US gender order is the overall subordination of women and dominance of men – the structure that women's liberation named "patriarchy"' (Connell 2000:24).

Conclusions

Any political theory which ignores gender is ignoring a major dimension of power and inequality which is built into the fabric of all societies. Such a theory can produce only partial understandings and policies which are likely to sustain what they ignore. However, some attempts to include or focus on gender can also have negative effects. In particular, theories influenced by postmodern philosophy can lead to an overemphasis on individual experiences and/or the ways in which gendered identities are constructed through language and culture, which downplays both their shared nature and their bases in socio-economic conditions. There is also a very real danger that more simplistic discussion of gender can conceal and sustain inequalities, both by diverting attention from racism and class exploitation and by failing to see the extent of male power and privilege. This means that gender can become not only an apology for capitalism, but also an apology for racism and patriarchy.

If the analysis of gender is to contribute to our understanding of contemporary society and the development of emancipatory politics, this must complement the analysis of class rather than substituting for it. Such an analysis would take as its starting point the perception that any attempt at meaningful gender equality runs straight against the constraints of a capitalist class system based on the pursuit of profit rather than the satisfaction of human need or the development of human potential. Collective action aimed at challenging gender oppression or stereotypes is therefore unlikely to be successful unless it also embraces wider socio-economic concerns.

Guide to further reading

Most of the academic literature on gender has been published since the 1970s, and it is rapidly growing. Ann Oakley (1997) gives a useful

history of the concept, particularly the sex/gender distinction. Judith Squires (1999) provides a good overview of the current status of gender in political theory, marred by the omission of socialist feminist perspectives; this perspective is explicitly taken in Lynn Segal's excellent book (1999). Judith Butler's work on the precarious nature of gender identity has been highly influential (1990). For a recent major contribution to the growing work on men and masculinity, see Robert Connell (2000), and for an overview see Valerie Bryson (1999a). The growing black feminist literature on the interconnecting nature of gender, 'race' and class is well represented in the work of the US writers Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and bell hooks (1984, 2000), and the collection edited by Chow *et al.* (1996), and the British collection edited by Heidi Mirza (1997). Cynthia Cockburn's work on gender and conflict offers important insights (1998, 1999). The collections edited by Anderson and Collins (1995), Carver and Mottier (1998) and Randall and Waylen (1998) provide useful discussions of a number of relevant issues. There are many web sites discussing gender and feminist issues. For useful starting points, see <www.feminist.org>, <www.psa.ac.uk> and <www.un.org/womenwatch>.

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7
‘Ethnicity’, ‘Race’ and Racism

Amrit Wilson and Kalpana Wilson

This chapter argues that ‘ethnicity’ is a problematic concept which is inextricably linked to racism. Evolving as a construct in those periods of history which established the roots of modern racism, the notion of ‘ethnicity’ was inscribed with racist stereotypes which have been continually reshaped by capitalism. Contemporary studies which use ‘ethnicity’ as a concept adopt one of two approaches – the ethnic studies school and postmodernism. Both see ‘culture’ as the key marker of ethnicity. Neither approach however analyses culture in the context of social and political forces, regarding it as essentially static. This leads to the obscuring of ‘race’ and class and the explaining away of the effects of racism as the results of cultural difference. We argue that these studies have been in line with the policies and strategies through which the United States of America and European states have controlled and manipulated their populations of Third World origin and we examine the effect of globalisation on the most recent constructions of ‘ethnicity’.

> ‘Ethnic group? I don’t know what that means, sometimes they say Somali. Sometimes it’s black bastard! Sometimes they just shout “refugee”!’

‘Ethnicity’ in everyday language is a word with shifting meanings. For the 14-year-old boy quoted above, it encapsulates experiences of alienation and racism. For others it may signify belonging and a

pride in one's own culture, and for others again, 'ethnicity' is simply a word which has replaced 'race' (Chirico et al. 2000).

In the social sciences 'ethnicity' has been examined through a variety of approaches, but these are almost all based on one of two distinct perspectives. According to the first of these, 'ethnicity' refers to 'aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves and are regarded by others as culturally distinctive' (Eriksen 1999:34). From this perspective, class, 'race' and power remain invisible and 'culture' appears to be independent of them. The second perspective sees ethnicity as a 'construct' whose key marker – 'culture' – is used to mask racism and class differentials. In this chapter we will examine both perspectives in the context of state policies relating to 'race'.

History and development of 'ethnicity'

The use of 'ethnicity' or notions similar to it can be observed in a variety of historical periods, particularly those in which the roots of modern racism were established. These periods include the crusades, the slave trade, the period of plantation slavery, and colonialism. Each of these periods saw the development of specific racist images which were ascribable, sometimes interchangeably, to different 'ethnic' groups. In other words, the ethnicities identified were themselves perceived within a framework of racism and inscribed with racist stereotypes and expectations. The pool of these images created over the centuries still remains today and can be drawn upon as and when required to serve the interests of capital. As Stuart Hall puts it, 'these *particular* versions may have faded. But their *traces* are still to be observed, reworked in many of the modern and up-dated images' (Hall 1995:22).

In many disciplines which grew out of slavery and colonialism – not only anthropology but disciplines as varied as psychiatry and art history – 'whiteness' was seen as both normative and the ideal; and in deference to this, but deviant from it, 'ethnicity', necessarily racialised, was ascribed. At the same time 'whiteness' too was defined primarily in relation to its 'other'. For example racism constructed and still constructs the images of Black sexuality and also as inverted mirror images white masculinities and femininities. As Toni Morrison, describing white male settler ideology in America, puts it, 'autonomy, authority, newness and difference, absolute power ... each one is made possible, shaped by, activated by a complex

awareness and employment of a constituted Africanism' (cited in Gabriel 1998:46). White masculinity in Europe was similarly shaped in a dialectical relationship with the constructed images of the sexuality of the colonised man who was seen as emotional, close to nature and therefore effeminate (see Chapter 6, this volume).

Racism however is not about images and perceptions alone. In the periods of colonialism and slavery as well as in contemporary advanced capitalist societies, 'race' and racism play a crucial role in determining material aspects of people's day to day lives. In this context:

> 'Race' is the modality in which class is lived. (Hall *et al.* 1978:394)

For example racism may be a key factor pushing a Black worker in the United States or Europe into a low paid job; racist abuse or discrimination may be the most tangible form in which s/he experiences the exploitative relationship between employer and employee.

At the same time racism justifies and perpetuates practices, policies and strategies pursued by the state. It is thus an integral part of capitalism and 'ethnicity' is inextricably bound to it.

'Ethnicity' and colonialism

In the colonial period, the concept of 'ethnicity' was an essential part of the categorising and classifying of the colonised people by the colonisers. Inherent in the colonial classifications were the power relations which facilitated such 'studies' and with them the objectification of these 'ethnographic' groups. The development of the concept of 'ethnicity' lent these studies a spurious aura of academic rigour.

The inherent racism of these studies, which by definition regarded the objects of study as inferior to the 'white man', gave a powerful and much needed boost to the spirits of the colonisers and helped them keep at bay the profound fear which they felt when confronted by the collective anger of the colonised people. They could in effect 'cut the natives down to size' by objectifying them and categorising them as inferior.

At the same time, such studies served the needs of colonialism by providing the ideological basis for policies which categorised, classified and organised people in easily manipulated groups, in an attempt to divide and fragment the broad currents of anticolonial

resistance. In addition, particularly in colonies like India which were large and highly complex social formations, and where the colonial authorities relied heavily on strategies of social control to maintain their power, these studies helped the colonial state to manipulate and distort culture itself. Through these distortions, and accompanying changes in the law and in the economy, they reshaped patriarchy (Vaid and Sangari 1989) and intensified caste and class inequalities to restructure societies and make them easier to control.

The legacies of these 'ethnic' policies (though they were not always labelled as such) are complex and interdependent. They include the bitter 'ethnic' divisions and long-drawn-out civil wars in the countries which experienced colonialism; the profoundly altered cultures of those who were colonised; and the overflowing pool of racist imagery of colonised people and their cultures.

'Ethnicity', racism and the role of the media

Why have these images from earlier periods of history survived? Firstly, as we will argue, there is a continuity of purpose. Racism still comes in useful to capitalism. Secondly, there exists in the media an ideal vehicle – or multiple vehicles – for the perpetuation of these images.

In the colonial period, adventure, according to Stuart Hall, was synonymous with the

> moral, social and physical mastery of the colonisers over the colonised. Later this concept of 'adventure', one of the principle categories of modern entertainment, moved straight off the printed page into ... the great Hollywood extravaganzas and comics. There with recurring persistence they still remain ... [and] they reappear on the television screen. (Hall 1995:21)

In other words, the European psyche has been permeated with racist notions of superiority kept alive through the last hundred years or more by various kinds of media which 'construct for us a definition of what race is, what meaning the imagery of race carries, and what the "problem of race" is understood to be' (Hall 1995:20).

Under advanced capitalism, the media have become increasingly powerful and pervasive, serving the political and economic ends of global capital. For example, reports of famines and disasters in Africa, Asia or Latin America, which are often a result of economic policies imposed by international institutions representing global capital, or

by western governments, portray them as essentially acts of God. The people suffering are presented as entirely helpless and devoid of spirit or agency, the voyeuristic camera leaving them neither privacy nor any dignity. For the media, the true heroes of these situations are white aid workers and medical teams who replicate the role of the missionaries and colonial officers of the past.

Wars within or between Third World countries are usually reported as 'ethnic conflicts' based on 'age-old hatreds' and irrational prejudices to which supposedly 'western' concepts of class or capitalism are assumed to have no relevance; when Third World people confront western forces, whether in Somalia or the Persian Gulf, they are depicted using orientalist and racist images of brutality, uncontrolled violence and low cunning. Meanwhile the entry of comparatively low numbers of refugees into North America and Europe is portrayed as the arrival of hordes of parasitic, dirty and essentially criminal 'scroungers' who pose a threat to white society.

Current status

The current ideas and debates on ethnicity initially emerged from academic research carried out in the 1960s and 1970s about Black and immigrant 'communities' living in the metropolitan countries of North America and Europe. This included two broad positions on which however there are many variations. Firstly, there was the position represented by Moynihan (1965) in the United States, which analysed the relationship between 'ethnic minorities' and 'majority society' in exclusively cultural terms. He was followed down this path by the 'ethnic studies' school which developed in Britain and elsewhere. Despite differences in emphasis, this group essentially agreed that the effects of class inequality or racism could generally be explained away as the results of cultural difference. Brookes and Singh (1979), for example, acknowledged that racism placed Black people in specific occupations to begin with but saw 'their own distinctive traditions and their ethnic identities ... influencing their occupational and industrial distribution' (cited in Lawrence 1982:115); Rex and Tomlinson (1979) proclaimed their opposition to culturalism but their conclusions were culturalist. For example they and others (Pryce 1979; Cashmore 1979) concluded that it was culture and identity which caused African Caribbean youth in Britain to confront the establishment: 'If the West Indian is plagued by self-doubt induced by white education and seeks a culture which will

give him [sic] a sense of identity', wrote Rex and Tomlinson, '... the Asians have religions and cultures and languages of which they are proud and which may prove surprisingly adaptive and suited to the demands of a modern industrial society' (Rex and Tomlinson 1979:237). On the other hand they regarded Asian youth as caught between two cultures and uncertain about 'ethnic identification'.

This was in contrast to the second group of writers and researchers, who used Marxist concepts as tools of analysis. Their starting point was the exploitation of the immigrant worker, who 'had been paid for by the country of his origin – reared and raised, as capitalist underdevelopment had willed it, for the labour markets of Europe' (Sivanandan 1982:103). For them, as Errol Lawrence put it in his critique of the ethnic studies school:

> ... 'race' has come to signify the crisis; where popular racist ideologies underpin and legitimate the institutionalised racist practices of the state ... it becomes necessary to challenge the orthodoxies of the 'race/ethnic relations' sociology ... not simply because it might contribute to academic debate, nor even because the field of enquiry provides a theoretical cover for racist ideas. Of more importance is the fact that their 'theories' about Black people help to shape public policy at every level. (Lawrence 1982:95–6)

Despite these critiques, however, the first approach, that of the ethnic studies school, continued to feed into the policies of the liberal democratic states of Europe. Britain and to a lesser extent France saw the implementation of strategies relating to Black populations in which 'ethnicity' was a guiding principle. These populations, which since the 1960s had been challenging the state through Black organisations with radical agendas, were from the late 1970s onwards encouraged to identify not as Black but as belonging to one of the 'ethnic minority' communities. Through policies of 'multiculturalism' the state funded and nurtured community organisations in urban areas facing 'special social problems'. In this way Black populations were reconstructed as communities with leaders who were politically acceptable to the state. Here:

> Ethnicity was a tool to blunt the edge of black struggle, to return 'black' to its constituent parts. (Sivanandan 1990:67)

In the process, as in the colonial period, multiculturalism actively consolidated the fragmentation of wider social groupings into

smaller, discrete 'communities'. What characterised these communities was not their history or their experiences in Europe. It was rather that they were regarded as each having a specific and cohesive culture – and culture in this context was regarded as consisting mainly of food, clothes and festivals. What is significant here is that both 'culture' and 'community' were being conceptualised and continually reconstructed by the state. At first, for example, the 'ethnic minority communities' were 'Asian' and 'Afro-Caribbean', later essentially linguistic – for example Gujarati, Punjabi, or in the case of Caribbeans, based around island of origin – and since the late 1990s they have been increasingly centred around religion, through the notion of 'Faith Communities'.

By the 1980s, while Rex and his colleagues remained influential, 'ethnicity' drew the attention of scholars with a new approach – postmodernism (see Chapter 3, this volume). Postmodernists are concerned to 'include' everyone in their analysis by looking at the world in a way which takes on board everyone's culture. For them the foundation of western social thought, modernity, is problematic as is modernity's emphasis on scientific objectivity and objective knowledge with its metanarratives and grand theories. Instead they emphasise discontinuity, difference and the celebration of the local, and are concerned with representations of the 'other', both imagined and real. Capitalism as such, and its development, are not considered worthy of a thorough ongoing analysis.

Postmodernism provided methods of analysing in depth the nature of experience. However it suggested no way of locating these experiences except in a mosaic of other 'different' experience and unlike the Marxist writers on 'race' sought no way forward. In fact postmodernism is patently against a way forward or vision. As Aijaz Ahmad puts it in his critique of postmodernism, for postmodernists,

> ... even to write about 'humanity' ... is to fall for that Enlightenment universalism that produces totalising metanarratives ... to speak of a 'vision' in that sense is to arrogate to oneself the right to legislate what is good for others. And is thus to be inherently violative of the individual's autonomy ... (Ahmad 2000:448)

Critical analysis

The conceptualisation of 'ethnicity' by both the ethnic studies culturalists and the postmodernists has two problem areas – culture and

community. For the first group, culture is essentially static and can remain insulated from social and economic changes. For example for Rex,

> in a multicultural society we should distinguish between the public domain in which there is a single culture based upon the notion of equality between individuals and the private domain, which permits diversity between groups. (Guibernau and Rex 1997:218)

Khan (1979) and Pryce (1979) saw Asian and African-Caribbean youth as confused and 'caught between' two (apparently unchanging) cultures. The postmodernists in general have not questioned the nature of 'culture'. Although it is central to their perspective, it is broadly accepted as given. It is seen in fact as 'the consensus that permits such knowledge [customary knowledge] to be circumscribed and makes it possible to distinguish one who knows from one who doesn't – the foreigner, the child' (Lyotard 1984, cited in Ahmad 2000:449). This conception of culture as a form of intuitive knowledge is not new: it surfaces time and again in all the right-wing tendencies of German Romanticism and European racism generally (Ahmad 2000). While some essentially postmodernist writers – for example, Anthias and Yuval Davis (1995) – acknowledge the significance of gender in this respect, they do not recognise the importance of social and political forces created by class, race and gender relations which constantly shape and reshape culture. As a result, the broad conceptualisation of culture for such writers is similar to that of liberal democratic capitalist states.

Also their perspective like that of the capitalist state – whether in the colonial period or today – links culture with that other problematic concept, community. As has been pointed out in many other contexts, the idealised concept of community, by ignoring the contradictions of class and gender actually perpetuates exploitative relationships and acts to maintain the status quo (see for example Shah 1997). It is through the valorisation of the notion of 'ethnic communities' that capitalist states have helped entrench a specific hierarchy by approving and funding, and therefore controlling 'community leaders' and 'spokespersons'. It is in the context of this hierarchy – which is both patriarchal and state controlled – that culture was and still is being reshaped to reflect implicitly racist and orientalist stereotypes.

To compound the problem, the rise of postmodern analysis, with its focus on the 'local' and on alternative discourses, came at a time when global capital controlled most mainstream (and many 'alternative') discourses. CNN and MTV became not only worldwide but penetrated to even the poorest villages. It is they who control the images which represent the 'local' and 'different' ethnicities; their guiding principle is that of seeking and opening up new markets.

Globalisation and 'ethnicity'

Globalisation in the last two decades has led to an increasing fragmentation of the processes of production, led by technological changes, and largely driven by the continuous search for sources of cheaper labour (see Chapter 1, this volume). In the process, ethnicity is being reconceptualised within the ideology of global capitalism.

What are the mechanisms through which this has been happening? Takeovers, mergers and the buying and selling of shares and enterprises and 'paper entrepreneurship' have become global and more profitable than production and *this* has become the underlying base of 'globalisation' (see for example *The Economist* 1992). At the same time Third World countries are facing two new types of development.

One group of countries, which lack the infrastructure to attract footloose global capital for short-term investments, has been opened up as a market for an endless supply of armaments which fuel long-drawn-out civil wars (those 'ethnic' conflicts) leading to colossal loss of life and devastation of communities and a stream of the dispossessed, a tiny fraction of whom arrive in Europe as refugees.

Meanwhile those countries which were comparatively more economically independent and built up some resources in the post-colonial era have been made to implement unrestricted freedom of movement across national boundaries for capital and goods (but not for labour), convertible currencies, and economic and social policies such as structural adjustment which increase unemployment and poverty and therefore generate a ready supply of cheap labour for global capital.

These changes are enforced by pressure from institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO as well as governments of advanced capitalist countries, who also play a key role in suppressing the people's movements which oppose them.

Religion, 'civilisation' and 'ethnicity'

This new system of control too is perpetuated and justified by racism, which now reflects globalisation while remaining rooted in the history and culture of the western societies where it originated. A feature of this new aspect of racism which emerged in the early 1990s is a direct focus on culture and an emphasis on the dominant discourse not on nation states or strategic blocs but on a vaguely defined but world-scale 'civilisation' against an equally global enemy – Islam: an enemy which has no controlling centre, unlike its predecessor, world communism, and few unifying features beyond a perceived threat to capitalism (Wilson 1993).

The development of this ideology, where religion becomes a key marker of 'ethnicity', can be seen to be part of the United States establishment's perceptions of US foreign policy needs. Its coherent expression came from Harvard University political scientist Samuel Huntington, writing in the influential quarterly *Foreign Affairs*. Huntington's thesis is that there are eight major civilisations – 'Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African' (Huntington 1993:25) and these are separated by 'fault lines' which means that they are always in conflict or danger of conflict. Civilisation is 'the broadest level of cultural identity' and is 'defined to a large extent by religion'. Western civilisation, he says is at an 'extraordinary peak of its power in relation to other civilizations'; to consolidate this he suggests promoting 'greater co-operation and unity within its own civilization, particularly between its European and North American components ... to limit the expansion of ... Confucian and Islamic states ...' (Huntington 1993:48–9).

The nature and goals of this 'Islamic civilisation' has since been constructed by the media with the constant repetition of phrases such as 'Islamic terrorism' and 'rogue states'. These ideas have now entered the realms of 'common sense'. The civilisations thesis has meanwhile been taken a step further with an even more direct focus on culture and values. *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, a collection of essays edited by Huntington and his Harvard colleague Lawrence Harrison – who is also a US foreign aid official – (Huntington and Harrison 2001) argues that there are striking correlations between economic development, income level and religion – in other words that certain religions are by their very nature linked to poverty! Remarkably, the essence of this argument is not very

different from Moynihan's – and Huntington invokes his formulation that 'the central conservative truth' is that it is culture, not politics that determines the success of a society.

From a theoretical perspective Huntington's thesis is clearly problematic because like the 'ethnicity studies' group before him he fails to conceptualise culture and religion correctly seeing them as static and monolithic whereas in reality they are constantly reshaped by social and economic forces. However its effect on the nature of racism and on the way ethnicity is perceived must not be underestimated.[1]

In Britain and France, which both have significant sections of their populations who are Muslim, the demonisation of Islam in the discourse of America's global strategy fed into media and state constructions of ethnic minority 'communities' to generate a specifically anti-Muslim racism. Key events in this process were the Gulf War, the Rushdie affair in Britain and the controversy surrounding the wearing of headscarves by Muslim girls in French schools. The construction of the 'Muslim' as fanatical, fundamentalist, violent and, crucially, owing allegiance to political forces external – and hostile – to Europe thus came to the forefront of racist imagery. Simultaneously, as in Huntington's thesis, culture and religion came to be conflated, and 'Muslim' became the new 'ethnicity'. As Claire Alexander (1998) notes, in Britain the term 'Muslim culture' increasingly started appearing both in welfare state documents and in

1. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 and the bombing of Afghanistan which followed them occurred after this chapter was written, but media coverage of these developments and official US discourse clearly illustrate and confirm our arguments. The western media have drawn heavily on anti-Muslim and orientalist racism, portraying the Afghan woman as an icon of oppression to be liberated by the west. This is despite some striking realities: that the appalling status of Afghan women has been ignored by the west for 20 years and results directly from the rise of Islamic forces funded and supported by the west; and that included amongst the US allies in the war are countries like Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which have a shameful record of persecution and oppression of women. US official discourse has followed Huntington's ideology of 'the clash of civilisations'. However, beyond the immediate US imperative to show that they are retaliating for the 11 September attacks, this is, on a material level, about the elimination of threats to the US and the consolidation of its power at a time when capitalism is in crisis. This is why countries as diverse as Egypt, the Philippines, Malaysia and Somalia are being labelled as possible future targets. Bush's terrifyingly open-ended 'war on terrorism' in fact epitomises the construction of Islam as the global enemy of 'western/global civilisation' and at the same time allows attacks to be launched on countries anywhere in the world.

academia, regardless of the diversity of groups adhering to variants of the Muslim faith which made the concept meaningless in practical terms as well as deeply flawed on a theoretical level.

Case study: 'ethnicity' in Britain

Globalisation, women's labour and 'ethnicity'

In Britain, globalisation was experienced in the early 1990s, in the wake of a decade of Thatcherism which dismantled much of its industrial base, and the recession. Britain now tries to attract investment from foreign-owned multinational companies on the basis of cheap labour and lax labour protection laws.

In this context, a specific role is played by patriarchal relationships within the 'ethnic' communities. This patriarchy has been intensified, as we mentioned earlier, by state policies concerning 'ethnic minorities'. For example, in provision of services for women facing domestic violence, the welfare state ignores the needs of African and African Caribbean women. Despite figures which show that for 'Black, Caribbean, African and other groups', the per head rate of offenders and victims is higher than for 'Indian/Pakistani groups', service providers go along with the stereotypical image of the 'strong, aggressive' African woman who does not need help (Cooke *et al.* 1999). In the South Asian communities, in contrast, having identified the status of women as a problem, the state intervenes with policies, practices and legal judgments shaped at least partially by colonial and orientalist stereotypes. So while the media portrays the South Asian man as barbaric, violently patriarchal and oppressive and the South Asian woman as passive, 'forbidden fruit' and a perpetual victim, the welfare state confirms and acts upon these images and assumptions. Patriarchy is reinforced with 'multiculturally sensitive' social workers often urging women seeking to leave violent marriages to think about the extended family and family honour or ask themselves, 'Who will marry my daughters if I do this?' (Wilson 1989).

It is women from 'ethnic' communities who are most likely to be low-paid, often part-time, temporary and contract workers, or paid nothing at all in small businesses owned by their families. In addition, a large proportion of these women are homeworkers. In some parts of Britain where male unemployment is high, it is women's earnings which keep the family afloat.

> It can be argued that these women's labour takes this particular form for reasons of class, race and patriarchy – not only the patriarchy of the capitalist state but the specific patriarchies of the various communities in Britain which have been given a safe place and nurtured by 'ethnicity friendly' policies and which now articulate with the broader patriarchy of global capital. (Wilson forthcoming)

Poor educational opportunities for young working-class women in general compounded by the reluctance to educate daughters above a certain level; inadequate and dwindling childcare provision compounded by the refusal of even unemployed male family members to share the burden of childcare: these are only two examples of how in Britain these 'ethnic' patriarchies of the communities articulate with patriarchy in the public arena to deliver women's labour to global capital at rates which ensure super-profits.

Britain's 'pluralist society': the Stephen Lawrence case

All the evidence suggests that not only racist attacks but other forms of racism are on the increase in Britain today. In this context, how does the British state, and more specifically the current 'New Labour' government, with its economic commitments to global capital and its political commitment to the United States, set about resolving the problems of 'race' and ethnicity? The dilemma for the state is how to maintain and 'manage' racism, which is indispensable to capital, while at the same time projecting the existence of a pluralist nation, a mosaic of ethnicities which respects 'difference'.

The Stephen Lawrence case symbolises this dilemma and its attempted resolution. Stephen Lawrence was a 19-year-old schoolboy who was murdered on the streets of South London in 1993. The police did nothing to arrest the five young men widely believed to be his killers, or to gather evidence against them, although this was readily available. During the next six years, Stephen's parents fought with courage and determination through a series of legal actions to bring his killers to justice. When the Labour government came to power in 1997, the Home Secretary instituted an inquiry into Stephen's murder. The inquiry, conducted by Sir William Macpherson, found the police guilty of 'institutional racism', which it described as including 'unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping' and involving 'the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional

service' (Macpherson 1999, Section 6.34). This was very different from '*institutionalised* racism', the term coined by the Black movement of the 1970s which was not just about the existence of racism in institutions but about the systematic institutionalisation of racism within the structures of the state and society. Institutional racism, by contrast, was acknowledged by the establishment, and the means to its eradication identified as training and 'cultural awareness'.

At the same time, the inquiry and the campaign by Stephen's parents, which was consistently devoid of broad political content, focussing entirely on Stephen as an individual, appeared to have an extraordinary effect on the British media. Gradually Stephen and his family became identified as 'good' and 'deserving' black people. In the words of Charles Wheeler, who wrote and presented a television programme on the issue: 'No longer was Stephen simply another anonymous victim of racial assault. He was what England expects its young Black men to be – law abiding, diligent and respectful … at least as important was the image of his parents – hardworking, God-fearing and dignified' (Wheeler 1999) – or, as a journalist interviewed on the programme put it: 'upwardly mobile, earnest conscientious people'. In the same period racial attacks increased. In the borough of Tower Hamlets in East London, for example, they rose by 300 per cent in the year of Stephen's death and two young Asians were seriously and permanently disabled in racial attacks. But these attacks and murders received little media attention. The reasons for this identified by Wheeler were, firstly, that the victims' parents were unable to 'communicate effectively with wider society' and secondly, that the campaigns to bring the attackers to justice were too overtly political. Stephen and his family were presented as commendably non-political. As a black woman interviewed by the programme, a holder of the OBE,[2] put it: 'The Lawrences were your ordinary family – there are people who are overtly working against racism … they were not engaged in that struggle and rightly so!' (Wheeler 1999). In other words the 'good Black person' was being constructed. It was an incarnation which was deeply patronising, implicitly racist and so out of date as to be alien to modern-day Britain. However it provided a solution to the state's dilemma over 'including' the black population – they were now quite explicitly

2. The OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) is a high civilian honour, conferred by the Queen on the advice of the British government.

divided into the good and deserving, who were acceptable, and the bad, who were undeserving of 'inclusion'.

Also problematic for Britain's image as a pluralist society is the implementation from 1993 onwards of a series of draconian asylum laws which deny basic civil and democratic rights to those within their purview, and the consolidation of a new racist category, the refugee, which in turn embraces a multiplicity of ethnic stereotypes such as those of Somalis, Algerians or Kosovans. The recent legislation represents the culmination of discussions at the European level, in which the issues of combating 'global terrorism' (now seen inevitably as Islamic), preventing immigration, and deterring asylum seekers have been from the beginning inextricably linked. This discourse of paranoia has entered the pool of 'common-sense' racism via the media, leading to particularly vicious attacks on people who are already traumatised by their previous experiences.

How is the state's apparent concern over racism in institutions to be reconciled with its brutal and racist treatment of refugees? The Parekh Report on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain (Parekh 2000) produced by 23 'distinguished individuals', many of whom are close to New Labour, gives us a few clues as to the next step in New Labour's evolving policy on ethnicity. Britain, it tells us, is now in a position to 'seize the opportunity to create a more flexible, inclusive, cosmopolitan image of itself' (Parekh 2000:15). Drawing on 'consultations' with numerous selected individuals and ending with detailed recommendations, the report argues in essence for a shift from the liberal definition of a multicultural society, identical to John Rex's model (Guibernau and Rex 1997), to a pluralist model, a so-called 'community of communities' where there will be a recognition of cultural diversity in the public sphere and 'communities and identities will overlap and be interdependent' (Parekh 2000:42–4).

Conveniently, this remedy – with aspects of 'ethnic culture' in the public sphere – is in line with the atomisation and commodification of culture which is one of the features of contemporary global capital. Though this is not explicitly stated, it is clear that it is the market which will be the primary arena for this 'overlapping of communities'. Bell hooks (1994) has noted the key role which the Black middle classes and bourgeoisie play in the commodification of Blackness and Black culture in the United States. Britain's current rhetoric of inclusion is strategic both in providing an avenue for the

emerging Black middle-class and encouraging commodification of aspects of 'ethnic culture'.

Who, then, deserves to be included in the community of communities? Asylum seekers have been defined by the state and media as outsiders. And there are numerous other such categories – the long-term unemployed, the criminalised, and of course those who politically confront the racism and injustices of the state and its agencies. The experience of Stephen Lawrence's friend Duwayne Brookes, who was with Stephen when he was attacked, demonstrates this quite clearly. Excluded from the aura of the Lawrence family, Duwayne's more political, less individualised approach and his statements about the blatant injustices of the state led to his vilification by the media and harassment by the police.

Conclusion

'Ethnicity' is a construct which has been developed and reshaped throughout the history of modern racism. Each of the periods in which the roots of modern racism were established saw the development of specific racist images which were ascribable, sometimes interchangeably, to different 'ethnic' groups. In the colonial period ethnicity was used to categorise colonised people and divide the anti-colonial struggle. Perceived within a racist framework, the ethnicities identified were therefore themselves inscribed with racist stereotypes and expectations which have been kept alive by a variety of forms of print and visual media.

More recently, ethnicity has been used as a concept by the 'ethnic studies' school and by postmodernists. Both these approaches use 'culture' as a key marker of ethnicity and they have regarded culture as essentially static. In contrast, Marxist analysts see ethnicity as a construct which is shaped by changing social, economic and political forces.

We argue that the approaches which emphasise 'cultural difference' have masked or explained away racism and class differentials and changes in the nature of capitalism. These approaches have served to legitimise state policies relating to 'race' in Europe and North America. These policies have used 'ethnicity' to divide and manipulate populations of Third World origin and weaken their challenges to state racism; to deepen racist stereotypes; and to heighten patriarchy in these 'ethnic communities' in the interests of social control and for the benefit of capital.

In the last two decades the globalisation of production together with new ideologies linked to post-Cold War United States foreign policy have led to a change in the character of racism, with global ideologies becoming dominant. This has meant a recasting of 'ethnicity', with culture being increasingly conflated with religion. Once again, 'ethnicity' is serving to obscure the structures and relations of power both globally and locally.

Guide to further reading

Readings on ethnicity are perhaps necessarily polarised into two camps. The 'ethnicity school' is well represented in Guibernau and Rex (1997). John Rex's article 'Multicultural and Plural Societies' is particularly relevant. For the postmodernist approach, see Ali Rattansi's '"Western" Racism, Ethnicities and Identity in a "Postmodern" Frame' in Rattansi and Westwood (1994) and also Anthias and Yuval Davis (1995). For critiques of ethnicity, see 'Challenging Racism: Strategies for the 1980s' in Sivanandan (1990) and Lawrence (1982). A critical summary of some approaches is also provided in Chapter 1 of Solomos and Back (1995).

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8
The Third Way

Brendan Evans

The Third Way is a response, most notably by the Anglo-American parties of the centre-left, to a new set of historical circumstances, particularly the rise of a neo-liberal ideological hegemony in an increasingly globalised economy. Third Way governments are excessively cautious about their capacity to pursue radical reforms in this context, but they recognise the current pervasiveness of an international neo-liberal consensus.

The Third Way emerged from Anglo-American political discussions between proponents of New Democracy in the United States and New Labour in the United Kingdom. It is more than an attempt to provide ideological substance for the Clinton and Blair administrations, although both politicians were critical of traditional Democratic and Labour Party doctrines. It was partly the quest for electability which led Clinton and Blair to redefine their parties' stance. This was necessary given the longevity of the Reagan/Bush years in the United States and the Thatcher/Major years in Britain. The development of the Third Way was more than the desire to bring their parties back to political power, however, since it was also an attempt to create a programme which responded to the challenges of a changing world environment. Other European Social Democratic Parties also responded to the imperatives of electoralism and a changing international environment, some overtly, such as Schroeder's *Neue Mitte* in Germany, and others surreptitiously such as the French Socialists and the Swedish Social Democrats.

Historical trajectory

The Third Way is a product of a confluence of historical influences on the American Democratic Party and on New Labour in Britain. The British and American versions of the Third Way are the result of a two-way process of policy transfer, rather than one party being the model for the other. In both cases, the process of change can be traced back to earlier efforts at party modernisation and ideological change. The apogee of American liberalism occurred in the 1960s, through the combined impact of two different phenomena. First, the rise of the 'new liberalism,' based on the counter-cultural movements of feminism, gay rights, ecology and the anti-Vietnam War movement which climaxed in the capture of the Democratic Party with the candidacy of Senator George McGovern in 1972. Second, the 'old liberal' political tradition of Roosevelt's New Deal, culminating in 1965 with President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programme which carried policies of social welfare and state intervention further than ever before. The 'new liberalism' emerging from the social movements of the 1960s carried a high electoral price, which was revealed by 'presenting to voters an unequivocally ideological programme in 1972 when George McGovern's evangelizing liberalism was rewarded by a landslide victory for his Republican opponent' (Miroff *et al.* 1998:428). Similarly Johnson's Great Society programme's War on Poverty was widely perceived to have failed, and this perception together with the impact of the Vietnam War led to Johnson's demise in 1968. McGovern's disastrous electoral failure in the 1972 presidential election resulted both from the unpopularity of his 'new' liberal policies and from the impact of the failure of Johnson's 'old liberal' presidency. These alternative versions of liberalism 'aroused intense political passions, divided the Democratic Party not just between south and north, but also between liberals and blue-collar white workers' (Bowles 1998:215). The Democratic Party was wounded by these ideological tensions. It was in this context that the Democratic Leadership Council produced a Third Way alternative between 1985 and 1991, to reunite the Democratic Party within itself and with the American people (Walker 1997:9).

The Labour Party's modernisation in Britain, culminating in the Third Way, dates back to an earlier period of electoral failure, the 1950s, when the American Democrats were still the majority party in the United States. After three election defeats the then Labour

leader, Hugh Gaitskell, proposed the abandonment of Clause Four from the Party's constitution, which committed Labour to public ownership. At that time the German, Canadian and Norwegian social-democratic parties had all undergone a revision of their aims (Brivati 1997:344). Gaitskell's failure to secure the abandonment of Clause Four was a reflection of the times when, for many, Clause Four remained 'the ark of the covenant'. Subsequent attempts to modernise Labour between 1959 and 1994, however, made Blair's pursuit of the removal of Clause Four easier. The thrust of Gaitskell's conception of the Labour Party's mission, that of coupling social justice with economic efficiency, foreshadowed Blair's later focus on attacking social exclusion and economic decline.

Callaghan's Labour government from 1976 to 1979 was also forced by circumstances to cut spending and introduce monetary controls. As with the divisive rise of 'new liberalism' among American Democrats, there was a major left-wing upsurge in the Labour Party, which divided the party and turned the 1983 General Election for Labour into a severe drubbing as traumatic as that endured by the Democrats in the Presidential election of 1972. President Jimmy Carter was a transitional figure in the gradual recovery of the Democrats, and in Britain, Neil Kinnock launched a campaign of party modernisation. His Policy Review in 1987 argued for the removal of previous shibboleths, including Clause Four. One Labour commentator argues that Kinnock's modernisation of the party was 'fragile enough ... that we might not have won in 1997. It needed the modernisation agenda to continue, which is what Tony did, to a fantastic triumph' (Gould 2000:142). Blair persuaded the party to change Clause Four, but his statement that Kinnock was the true creator of New Labour demonstrates that Third Way reforms are a continuation of a linear process of change.

Current usage

The Third Way is an active political ideology. While Blair is cautious about rigid, outdated dogmas, Clinton regards the Third Way as an ideology (Driver and Martell 1998:180; Blair 1988, Summary). The argument that the Third Way is non-ideological rests on an implausibly restrictive conception of ideology; confining it to coherent, universal, long-established systems of belief such as fascism and communism (Evans 1984:126–40).

An inclusive definition of ideology acknowledges that all political decisions are rooted in an attitude towards the status quo and based upon political values. All values are ideological in that they are founded upon a desire to 'preserve, amend, uproot, or rebuild a given social order' (Seliger 1976:14). Third Way advocates are always clear about what they reject, and ideology is concerned with rejections as well as recommendations. Some ideological ingredients of the Third Way may be identical with those displayed in conservatism, liberalism or social democracy, but this is a reflection of ideological pluralism, in which the same tenets may be shared by different ideologies. It is in the unique blend of ideological ingredients that the Third Way's distinctiveness is located.

The Third Way is a transnational project, which explains its current robustness. It drew from the American Democratic Leadership Council's publication in 1996 which offered 'a new progressivism', although New Labour can take satisfaction that the Democrats themselves came to prefer the term the 'Third Way' to progressivism. The New Democrats sought to minimise big government:

> the advent of new global markets, and the knowledge economy, coupled with the ending of the Cold War, have affected the capability of national governments to manage economic life and provide an ever-expanding range of social benefits. We need to introduce a different framework, one that avoids both the bureaucratic, top-down government favoured by the old left and the aspiration of the right to dismantle government altogether … The cornerstones of the new progressivism are said to be equal opportunity, personal responsibility and the mobilizing of citizens and communities. With rights come responsibilities. We have to find ways of taking care of ourselves, because we can't now rely on the big institutions to do so. Public policy has to shift from concentrating on the redistribution of wealth to promoting wealth creation. Rather than offering subsidies to business, government should foster conditions that lead firms to innovate and workers to become more efficient in the global economy. (The New Progressive Declaration, Washington 1996, cited in Giddens 2000:2)

This conception of the state's role prevents it from curbing the excesses of global capitalism or tackling market failures. In the post-Reagan political circumstances, however, it constituted an effective

way of halting the dismantling of government and preventing the disappearance of welfare provision. American Third Way ideas thus tend to acquiesce in the attacks on big government launched by conservative Republicans in the 1980s. The new consensus in the United States allowed Clinton to acquiesce in the goal of 'a leaner and meaner government'.

Third Way advocates argue that Clinton's economic achievements were considerable, but that his policies have also been positive for social security and for reducing economic inequality. They argue that Clinton pointed the way to centre-left parties by retrieving the support of lower- and middle-income voters. They also argue that Clinton recognised that globalisation led to citizenry seeking more security from a supportive state, while favouring less 'bureaucracy' and more 'choice' and 'accountability'. He made the Democrats acceptable on the issues of economic management, crime and defence which was the prerequisite for securing credibility in the areas of health and education. Clinton's advocacy of a middle-class tax cut was a voter-friendly way of introducing progressively higher taxation on the very rich. His fiscal caution in reducing the deficit helped to generate a surplus which was used for such progressive purposes as hiring more teachers and providing health insurance for uninsured children. His administration also introduced an Earned Income Tax Credit for poorer families (*New Statesman*, 19 July 2000). Clearly New Labour emulated Clinton's plan to reduce the deficit by adhering to the Conservative government's spending plans for two years. Similarly, its Family Tax Credit proposal was influenced by Clinton's Earned Income Tax Credit policy. The 2000 presidential campaign of Al Gore sustained Third Way approaches in its stress upon 'inclusiveness' and Gore's support for tax reductions for the middle classes rather than the rich (<http://www.bbc.co.uk> 27 September 2000). Gore even claimed to have invented the revolt against big government (*Guardian*, 26 October 2000).

There have also been more specific public policy transfers from the United States to Britain. The concept of 'zero tolerance' to reflect an uncompromising attitude towards crime is one example, although Labour has extended the idea to failing schools and hospitals. Most central is the concept of 'workfare' which Labour previously rejected.

One writer asserts that Blair '... designed and built New Labour, using blueprints faxed from Little Rock' (King and Wickham Jones 1999:73). Clinton described his reformed party's appeal as being

neither 'conservative or liberal; ... It is different. It is new' (cited in Wadden 1994:7). Blair's visit to Clinton in 1993 led to his famous soundbite about the need to be 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime' (Rentoul 1995:308). Philip Gould, who is a major New Labour adviser, was overt about the need to emulate Clinton's recasting of the Democratic party to shed Labour's former liberal image: 'Patricia Hewitt [later a New Labour minister] and I [Gould] argued that Labour should emulate Clinton's success in discarding the Democrats' image as "the party of the poor and the past" by forging a "populism of the centre rather than the left"' (Gould 1998:176). They correctly interpreted Clinton's political strategy as capturing the middle-class vote and resisting lobbying from internal Democratic Party special interests such as organised labour.

A neglected Anglo-Saxon influence on the development of New Labour is the experience of the Australian Labour Party (ALP). There were many connections between New Labour politicians and the ALP leadership of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. The ALP pursued a novel neo-liberal strategy in government from 1983 to 1986. Blair was influenced by their privatisation and deregulation policies, particularly Keating's *Working Nation* strategy of welfare to work (Rentoul 1995:279).

One difference between New Labour and previous incarnations of Labour ideology is its eclecticism in drawing policies from both right and left. For example, in 1997 it simultaneously introduced tuition fees for Higher Education students but also taxed the private utilities in a 'windfall profits' tax to fund the New Deal (Byers 1997).

Mandelson and Liddle claim:

> New Labour believes that it is possible to combine a free market economy with social justice; liberty of the individual with wider opportunities for all; One Nation security with efficiency and competitiveness; rights with responsibilities; personal self-fulfilment with strengthening the family; effective government and decisive political leadership with a new constitutional settlement … a love of Britain with a recognition that Britain's future has to lie in Europe. (Mandelson and Liddle 1995:17)

They claim that their policies are derived from a new 'radical' centre and argue that the old left–right spectrum is obsolete, and that the openness of the Third Way creates space for fruitful policy development. New Labour ministers proclaim that they are interested only

in 'what works', or as David Blunkett expresses it: 'in the end it is outcomes that matter' (BBC Radio 4, File on Four, 2 February 1999). These outcomes are necessarily rooted, however, in a set of ideological values; it is merely that the Third Way is more eclectic in determining those values than previous Labour governments. The Third Way questions previous certainties about the roles of the market, the state and civil society. 'The answer depends not on ... a relatively fixed ideological position but on the best way to achieve a desired end' (Temple 2000:320).

Blair's claim that a new social democratic consensus is emerging in Europe, based upon the British example, is doubtful (*Economist*, 12 June 1999). The phenomenon is better explained by the concept of 'parallelism': governments reacting to common economic and social changes with similar policy responses. Government ministers elsewhere in Europe have shown interest. These include Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson, the European Union President Romano Prodi, the Dutch Social Democrat Wim Hok and the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who has proposed his own '*die Neue Mitte*'. The Blair/Schroeder relationship was cemented by an Anglo-German paper in June 1999 supporting freer markets, flexible labour markets and lower taxes (*Guardian*, 11 June 1999).

France and Spain were ahead of Britain in pursuing Third Way politics without so naming it. French leaders in the 1980s such as Mitterrand, Rocard and Fabius reduced the tax burden. In 1984 Mitterrand praised 'wealth creating capacities' and urged the left to discuss 'innovation', 'competitiveness', 'initiative' and 'profits'. While '... in the 1980s Tony Blair was still sweating over Clause Four, the French socialists had embraced the market and competition and were preparing the ground for privatizations' (Goes, 2000:2). In Spain in 1979, Felipe Gonzalez, the Spanish Social Democratic leader, persuaded his party to jettison its Marxist heritage (Heywood 1995:196–7). The current leader, Rodriguez Zapatero, argues for a Third Way variant, *Neuva Via*, asserting that the Spanish Social Democrats (PSOE) must change themselves before seeking to change society. He argues that the benefits of globalisation should be universally extended but that a strong and flexible economy is the prerequisite for social justice (*Economist*, 4 August 2000).

The current French socialist leader, Lionel Jospin, claims that 'if the Third Way lies between ultra-liberalism and state socialism I'm interested. If the Third Way locates itself between neo-liberalism and social democracy, count me out' (*Independent*, 16 September 1998).

He also refused to sign the joint Blair–Schroeder declaration. Despite this rhetoric, however, Jospin's coalition government has privatised, sought balanced budgets, been tough on crime and developed a French version of welfare to work to tackle youth unemployment (*Observer*, 7 March 1999). Jospin also proclaimed that in economic policy 'you can't expect everything from the state' (*Economist*, 18 September 1999). His public scepticism about the Third Way reflects the circumstances of his coalition government in which he leads a coalition of socialists, greens, radicals and communists. To hold the coalition together, Jospin has to use careful discourse. But ultimately any ideology is positioned by a synthesis of its actions and its words. Jospin's actions are indicative. When Michelin laid off thousands of workers, despite a rise in profits, Jospin refused to respond, and when French farmers and hauliers blockaded oil depots in protest against the price of fuel, his government, unlike Blair's, conceded the principle of taxation reductions to a right-wing tax revolt. His government offers no coherent alternative to Blair, and is merely one of the variants emerging within the heterogeneous Third Way.

Criticisms of the Third Way

A critical analysis of the Third Way can be approached from Marxist or New Right perspectives as well as from current arguments about globalisation.

Marxist critiques of the Third Way

There are three main Marxist-based critical perspectives on the Third Way. These critiques can just as readily be applied to social democracy generally. They are:

1. The Third Way is simply the capitalist state in action as an agent of international capitalist interests
2. The Third Way contains reformist elements, but simply provides appropriate measures to support international capitalism at a particular stage of its development
3. Social Democracy has always been bourgeois/capitalist ideology falsely claiming that the contradictions in capitalism (particularly between capital and labour) can be superseded.

While Marxist critics of Third Way politics have not been evident in the United States, in Britain during the 1980s intellectuals writing

in *Marxism Today* criticised Old Labour for failing to respond, unlike Margaret Thatcher, to the 'New Times' of social individualism. They urged the containment of the public sector and the expansion of individual responsibilities. They were instrumental in dissolving the Old Labour project by 'setting the tone towards some sort of Third Way, when they called on the Left in Britain to outflank triumphant Thatcherism by part-embracing its modernizing, emancipatory and iconoclastic appeal, free of self-enclosing class-and-state entanglements from the past' (Westergaard 1999:429). After New Labour returned to power, however, they criticised the Third Way from a left-wing perspective, and demanded the return of capital controls to limit the amount of money invested abroad (*Marxism Today*, Special Edition, November 1999). It appears that, while claiming to offer a sociological analysis, they retain a lurking ethical dimension in their criticisms. Yet it was their dissolution of the Old Labour position, and their sociological analysis, which proved influential on Third Way thinkers. Certainly, Giddens, who has written most extensively on the Third Way and claims direct access to Blair, stresses contemporary social constraints rather than ethical values, and is concerned to preserve a cohesive society as a sociological rather than an ethical objective (*Economist*, 4 September 1999; Giddens 1998, 2000). The *Marxism Today* critique of the Third Way is undermined, therefore, because of the weight it had previously placed upon the new society, and the need to re-evaluate outmoded political programmes (Finlayson 1999:281).

Criticisms from the right

The Republican leader Newt Gingrich developed his 'Contract with America' in 1994. It was more than a theoretical critique of Clinton's policies as it captured control of both the Republican Party and of Congress in 1994. The 'Contract' attacked 'big government', urged the return of political authority to the states, opposed Clinton's programme for health care reform, and proposed major budget and tax cuts, a rolling back of the federal government's capacity to enforce environmental regulations and a reduction of the capacity of individual citizens to sue business (Miroff *et al.* 1998:73).

The British Conservative Party is torn between condemning the Third Way as pale Conservatism and deploring it as disguised socialism. One right-wing critic contrasts the clear radical agenda by the free market right with the Third Way, which merely offers 'a

largely theoretical stance: a way of saying "We're not old Labour, but we're not Tories either". It provides no coherent guide to action.' It is tough both on crime and its causes, seeks to improve public services and keep taxes low; devolves power to Scotland and Wales but not by much, is pro-European but cautious about the euro; runs an ethical foreign policy but sells arms; and promises tough choices but does not take them. (*Economist*, 31 July 1999, 22 January 2000). Another critic, Samuel Brittan, prefers direct cash transfers to citizens to Labour's state spending on health and education, because 'such services reduce the income citizens can spend at their discretion' (*New Statesman*, 1 January 1999). A final critic, Alan Ryan, asserts that the Third Way will fade when an economic recession occurs, because then 'the government would have to move either to the left or to the right – to raise taxes and borrow, or stick to a fiscally responsible position, and see unemployment climb' (quoted in Giddens 2000:13).

Globalisation and the Third Way

The Third Way thinkers exploit the term globalisation to justify their claim that traditional social democracy is obsolete. Their critics on the left argue, however, that globalisation is a pretext for the betrayal of social democracy. Broadly there are three perspectives which the globalisation literature suggests in interpreting the Third Way:

1. Globalisation is a reality and both European social democracy and American liberalism are rendered defunct
2. Globalisation is a more nuanced concept leaving a restricted capacity for a social democratic strategy
3. Globalisation is mythical and the Third Way is a voluntary capitulation to neo-liberalism.

We shall consider each of these in turn.

Globalisation as reality

The New Democrats and New Labour tend towards this first perspective, accusing those who reject globalisation of being overly concerned to protect obsolete policies (Giddens 1998:28). If this perspective is valid, then it is appropriate that Clinton promoted American membership of the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) (Walker 1997:285). It was equally appropriate for New Labour ministers to use international fora to urge the deregulation

of labour markets, the liberalising of world trade and the redefinition of the role for the state. Yet such policies have detrimental implications for the traditional goals of liberals and social democrats. NAFTA threatened the jobs of organised labour in the United States and Clinton divided his party on the issue, and a deregulated labour market in both Britain and America weakens trade unions and reduces the amount of protection that workers can enjoy. Liberalising world trade deprives nation states of the capacity to introduce protection for their own industries, and replaces it with global competitiveness, in which workers have to compete internationally for employment. This shifts the balance of power towards capital.

A redefinition of the role of the state means that it ceases to intervene economically to produce full employment, and socially to uphold a welfare state to protect the vulnerable. New Labour consistently emphasises the imperative of international competitiveness, which requires governments to pursue policies of economic stability. This makes the fight against inflation paramount, regardless of labour market or public expenditure consequences. If Britain is to rise to the challenge of the 'new and fast growing global economy' which is being felt 'in every home and every community in our country' then it is essential to 'demonstrate stability in monetary and fiscal policies' (Cerny 1997:147). Blair considers that 'the idea of solving problems by spending money raised through taxes' is 'unsustainable in a modern global economy' (Gould 1998:284).

It is clear why left-wing Democrats such as the Reverend Jesse Jackson and the former California Governor Jerry Brown preferred the 1988 Democratic Dukakis manifesto to that promoted by Clinton in 1992. Dukakis advocated an enhancement of the strength of American families by 'programs to prevent abuse and malnutrition among children, crime, dropouts and pregnancy among teenagers'; but by 1992 Clinton's Third Way manifesto rejected the idea 'that there is a program for every problem' and stressed personal responsibility (Walker 1997:147). Birnbaum argues that Clinton's style of Third Way politics, welfare reform, for example, requiring millions to leave existing programmes, conflicts with traditional policy to the point where the psychoanalytic concept of 'identification with the aggressor', or the mentality of 'if you can't beat them join them' comes to mind (Birnbaum 1999:439).

A consequence of the Third Way's economic strategy is the shift from a welfare to a competitive state. The purpose of welfare provision becomes the promotion of economic growth. The need is

for 'investment in human capital' as, in place of the welfare state, 'we should build the social investment state, operating in the context of a positive welfare society' (Giddens 1998:117). This theory of competitiveness underpins New Labour's policy of job creation for the unemployed, based on American exemplars, and its decision to encourage single mothers into the labour market rather than have them rely upon benefits. Welfare to Work policies are seen by Third Way critics on the left as instilling flexible labour market perspectives upon claimants. Left-wing critics also deplore the Labour Government's rejection of a link between pensions and earnings on the grounds of unaffordability. Birnbaum argues that this changed conception of the role of government demonstrates that 'the Third Way is not a project for humanizing or tempering capitalism, but for adapting to the capitalism of the economic boom' (Birnbaum 1999:446).

A more nuanced conception of globalisation

Adherents of the Third Way would be more convincing if they adopted the second, more subtle, perspective. Globalisation is an intellectual construct not a known fact. It is argued here that while there are global forces at work which restrain the autonomy of the nation state, globalisation has to be advanced in a nuanced fashion.

The Third Way tends to be too facile in its uncritical acceptance of globalisation. Giddens is an example:

> Economic globalisation is real, and different from analogous processes in the past, has become increasingly difficult to dispute – whatever some of the critics might say ... Globalisation is by no means wholly economic in its nature, causes or consequences. It is a basic mistake to limit the concept to the global marketplace. Globalisation is also social, cultural and political ... While still dominated by industrial nations, it isn't simply the same as Westernisation – all countries in the world today are affected by globalisation processes ... In addition to the powerful influences of the global market place and new communications technology there is a groundswell of 'globalisation from below', involving millions of ordinary people as well as organised groups of all kinds. An infrastructure of global civil society is being built by these changes. (Giddens 2000:65)

It is argued that such claims should be neither accepted nor dismissed.

It is easy to resist the extreme claims of the early advocates of globalisation that the nation state has become powerless (Strange 1986). But neither is the concept of globalisation mythical (Hirst and Thompson 1996). The more nuanced interpretation recognises the capacity of the state to act as an agent, and to adopt effective policies of its own choosing, despite the impact of structural forces from an internationalised economy. Nor should all states be seen as having an identical relationship with the world economy, as individual states are differently inserted into the global system depending upon their reliance upon exports. Both the United States and Germany are better able to withstand external pressures, therefore, than is Belgium. Many aspects of economic and social life, such as labour markets, also remain national, while trade is also increasingly regionalised. Regionalisation means that British policies are more constrained by the European Union than by the wider world. The concept of internationalisation is altogether a more appropriate concept with which to analyse current phenomena, therefore, than is globalisation. Over a century ago, Karl Marx first referred to 'the universal interdependence of nations' (Marx 1848).

A nuanced interpretation of globalisation questions the simplistic claims of the Third Way and its left-wing critics.

Globalisation as myth

A brief review of the globalisation literature also provides support for the conclusion that globalisation is itself an ideological phenomenon, but is exploited by state elites to protect powerful interests. It provides an instrument to legitimise a revival of classical nineteenth-century economics. Yet ideologies only succeed when they carry some conviction about current circumstances.

The recent intensification in internationalisation can be traced back to the internal affairs of the United States. In the late 1960s the Johnson administration sought simultaneously to implement the Great Society Programme and to prosecute the Vietnam War without raising taxes. The inflationary consequences were such that by 1971 the country's economic difficulties led to the ending of the Bretton Woods agreement which had linked all major currencies to a fixed exchange rate with the dollar. The ending of the agreement, and the fourfold rise in the price of oil in 1973, destroyed the stable post-war economic order. This induced an international recession and the emergence of a new neo-liberal ideological hegemony, propagated within the American Treasury and by such leading international

actors as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization (Gardner 1975:202). This reduced the capacity for traditional American liberalism and European social democracy to pursue their previous agendas and shifted the real decision-making process on the main issues from 'the national to ... a global and non-territorialised' basis (Badie 2000:318).

This situation leaves two major possibilities for domestic political action. First, national parties and leaders can interpret the neo-liberal global imperatives to their own local audience and provide their own narrative to explain the international circumstances. Subtle differences, therefore, become apparent between Reagan and Thatcher and between Blair and Clinton in the explanations that they offer. Second, there are areas of national policy independence. There is no inherent reason why a future Democratic administration could not organise universal health insurance, introduce gun control legislation or reform campaign finance. Equally a second-term Blair government has the capacity to liberalise its stance on freedom of information, trial by jury and free social care for old people. Third Way governments have made unnecessary compromises, therefore, with right-wing opponents in areas within their discretion.

Conclusions

The concept of the Third Way supports an understanding of contemporary global society and political processes. The period from 1944 to 1971, under the Bretton Woods agreement, sustained an era of liberal or social democratic reform in America and Europe. Such programmes became unsustainable during the 1970s when Reagan and Thatcher appeared better able to produce narratives for domestic political consumption, enabling them to exercise power during the 1980s. They propounded an aggressive neo-liberal economics. The Third Way emerged as a tortuous attempt to synthesise neo-liberalism with the progressive politics which the Democrats and Labour had previously avowed. The imperatives of globalisation on national policy were exaggerated in Third Way rhetoric; but the story was told with sufficient force to enable the majority of Democratic and Labour party activists reluctantly to accept the Third Way as a means of governing in the new international economy. The Third Way also offered a means of overcoming the problem of electability for parties with a substantial blue-collar worker base, in increasingly middle-class societies. As Rubinstein argues, 'British society has

become increasingly middle-class. It is this new Britain which has inevitably produced a leader in the mould of Tony Blair' (Rubinstein 2000:166).

The Third Way singularly fails to offer radical claims for the future and offers only micro reforms. For example, Clinton appointed members of underrepresented groups to the courts and the federal bureaucracy and Labour has introduced a series of constitutional reforms such as devolution to Scotland and Wales and the Human Rights Act. The exaggerated concern by Third Way enthusiasts to capitulate to the demands of business, and to accept the trend towards deregulation, even where some reregulation might be possible, diminishes its radical possibilities.

The Third Way is an ideology because it has a clear orientation towards the status quo. It is appropriate to challenge established progressive ideologies in America and Europe, otherwise ideologies become rooted in ahistorical circumstances (Bevir 2000:278). Whether the Third Way succeeds in overcoming the concepts of capitalism and class, however, must itself be an ideological assessment, made by each individual student. It is always implausible to argue for the supersession of ideological concepts, an error made by Daniel Bell's proclaimed 'end of ideology' in the 1950s and Fukuyama's 'end of history' in the 1980s (Bell 1960; Fukuyama 1992). Neither the liberal/social-democratic consensus of the 1950s, nor the liberal/capitalist consensus of the 1980s, nor the Third Way, have any finality. Such teleological perspectives are inherently implausible. International neo-liberal imperatives are currently extremely powerful, however, and the Third Way helps to explain the limitations that they impose. The notion that it can supersede class analysis, however, is as naive a position as that advanced by Bell and Fukuyama. At most the Third Way provides an important complement to class analysis.

Guide to further reading

The best guides to the theoretical basis of the Third Way are the two works on the subject by Giddens (1998, 2000). For the American dimension, the article by Wadden (1994) is most appropriate, although the specific study of Clinton by Walker (1997) is very clear and readable. The *New Statesman* article (19 July 2000) also offers an excellent brief analysis of the American Third Way. For the British context, Richards (1998) is most appropriate for a sympathetic inter-

pretation and King and Wickham-Jones for a critical perspective (1999). There is much that is relevant to the global environment of the Third Way on IMF, World Bank and OECD web sites.

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9
Empowerment

Hannah Cooke

In this chapter I discuss the concept of empowerment, with particular reference to empowerment in organisations. I consider the discursive construction of the empowered worker and empowered consumer and relate these creations to the neo-liberal reforms from the 1980s onwards. I conclude that, despite the term's progressive sound, empowerment policies have increased centralised control and shifted new costs and responsibilities onto ordinary citizens. Far from furthering radical approaches, empowerment serves the interests of capitalism by undermining collectivism and reducing demands on the welfare state.

> Heaven helps those who help themselves is a well-tried maxim embodying in a small compass the results of vast human experience. The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of the many, it constitutes the true source of national vigour and strength. Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects but help from within invariably invigorates. Whatever is done *for* men or classes, to a certain extent takes away from the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves. (Samuel Smiles, *Self Help*, 1859:1)

Empowerment has connected together ideas about how workplaces should change with ideas about how both public and private services should treat their clients. Worker empowerment is often believed to go hand-in-hand with consumer empowerment. The rhetoric of

empowerment has a particular resonance in the public sector and connects to contemporary debates about the role of the welfare state. My own interest in the concept has grown from my experiences as a nurse and nurse researcher in the United Kingdom. In this chapter I will consider empowerment as a concept which is employed in debates about how organisations should be run, particularly public sector organisations, and I will base my analysis on empirical examples from healthcare. The wider issues of empowerment raised in relation to calls for more participative democratic forms are beyond the scope of this chapter. Some of these issues are covered in the chapter on civil society (see Chapter 5).

History of the term

In order to understand why empowerment has acquired such widespread usage, we need first to understand something of the history of the term. This may help us to make sense of the puzzling contradictions associated with the term, particularly the fact that empowerment rarely seems to entail any change in the distribution of power.

The empowerment literature has drawn heavily on the ideas of radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Both the ideas and the techniques of these movements have been appropriated and put to new uses. Empowerment has come into common parlance amongst managers as a term to describe desired changes, without a clear understanding of the origins of the idea of empowerment. Managers use the term in part because it has a progressive feel about it. Empowerment, then, has become loaded with a variety of meanings and associations and for the sake of clarity and understanding we should try to understand where these meanings have come from.

I have said that the advocates of empowerment draw on the ideas of radical thinkers of the 1960s and 1970s. Two themes which characterised much of the radicalism of this period were an antagonism towards traditional authority and an emphasis on individualistic self-expression. This has led to radicals of this period being linked more generally with romanticism, and they have been described as 'new age' or 'anarcho-' capitalists (see, for example, Carrier 1997; Heelas 1993).

This period saw a particularly sustained attack on the professions as 'institutions of social control' (see, for example, Zola 1972).

A minority of writers linked this to a Marxist analysis of the role of professions under capitalism (Navarro 1978). For the majority it was the expertise of the professions which was 'disabling' and a threat to individual liberty. The rise of the professions was often linked to the rise of industrialism (or more recently modernism). The need to challenge the power of the professions was linked to a romantic critique of industrial society. It was presumed that we were moving towards a post-industrial (or postmodernist) society in which the power of professions and the bureaucracies that sustained them could and should crumble. This negative vision of a 'technocratic' society dominated by elites of self-serving experts has been reiterated recently in the work of Beck (1992).

One of the most influential writers pursuing this theme was Ivan Illich. His critique of medicine is typical of the genre (Illich 1977). Illich argued that medicine had produced 'iatrogenesis' (doctor-induced sickness). Iatrogenesis took three forms. Firstly, medicine harmed people by 'poisoning' them with drugs and 'mutilating' them with surgery; this was 'clinical iatrogenesis'. Secondly, medicine encouraged dependency, as did other caring professions; this was 'social iatrogenesis'. Finally, medicine 'paralysed healthy responses' to suffering and death. We no longer understood the 'art of suffering' and preferred an 'engineered' life to a 'healthy' acceptance of death and suffering. This was what Illich called 'cultural iatrogenesis'.

These kinds of analysis frequently cast the caring professions as the arch-villains of contemporary society, creating oppressive relationships and a dependency culture. It was the power of technology and expertise which were at issue in this analysis, and economic and political factors took a back seat. It is not difficult to see how politicians eager to 'roll back' the welfare state in the interests of the 'free market' could appropriate such an analysis (see Colebatch and Larmour 1993 for a useful discussion of the idea of the market). The idea of the market has always been rhetorically linked in western culture to the idea of freedom (Carrier 1997). The particular brand of radicalism advocated by Illich and similar thinkers found a natural home alongside the new right-wing radicalism of politicians such as Thatcher and Reagan (see Hayek 1988 for an exposition of their ideas). It is the hybridisation of these two types of radicalism which has given us the concept of empowerment. It is a term that has come into common parlance because it serves a number of useful purposes for those in power.

What is empowerment?

Empowerment is a term which has been put to use by a variety of actors in different settings. What do managers, professionals and politicians mean when they talk about empowerment? To answer this question I will look first at how empowerment is defined in the academic literature which employs the concept. I will then look at its meaning in use in two fields; firstly, the efforts of health professionals to empower their patients and, secondly, the attempts of managers to empower their workforce.

I have said that empowerment owes its origins to a discourse in which individualism and self-expression were both important values. Empowerment has been closely linked to the discourses of self-improvement and personal therapies. Within the academic field, psychologists have played an important role in shaping the concept. Rappoport (1987) has said that empowerment entails 'individual determination' of one's life. Empowerment is symptomatic of a resurgence of individualism and a decline in collective responses to oppression. Empowerment entails a 'sense of personal control' and, according to Kieffer, '... the real issue may rest not so much on having more power but on feeling more powerful' (1984:9).

The concept of empowerment has been operationalised in empirical studies by psychometric tests measuring 'self-mastery', 'locus of control', 'competence', etc. (see, for example, Zimmerman and Rappoport 1988). Psychological studies of empowerment make a clear distinction between a 'sense of personal control' and actual control. Studies of empowerment often seek to engineer a sense of personal control; we are talking here about people feeling powerful, not being powerful.

To stress this point, discussions of empowerment often invoke dictionary definitions of empowerment (Gibson 1991). The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'empower' as:

> ... to invest legally or formally with power; to authorise, license. To impart power (to do something). To enable, permit. (1973:649)

Empowerment is a passive concept. It implies that we are allowed or permitted power by a powerful authority. Power is conferred and licensed for a specific purpose. We cannot take power. Empowerment is a duty, not a right. Rappoport says: 'Empowerment refers to a process of becoming able or allowed to do something where there is

a condition of dominion or authority with regard to that specific thing' (Rappoport 1987:129).

He says, therefore, that empowerment is as much about limitations as it is about powers. Empowerment is about shouldering responsibilities conferred on us by those with power. The connections to Samuel Smiles, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, are instructive. The Victorian era combined free market individualism with moral puritanism. Self-help was an important value. The era was haunted by the spectre of pauperism, and much energy was devoted to distinguishing the deserving from the feckless. Ironically for a term which we associated with a rhetoric of progressivism, empowerment may be one of the most tenacious of Victorian values to pursue us into the twenty-first century.

Empowerment and neo-liberalism

We can therefore link the concept of empowerment to the rise of neo-liberalism and the particular public sector reforms that arose out of the neo-liberal project. These have been variously described as 'new public management', 'new managerialism' and 'entrepreneurial governance'. There have been many powerful champions of 'new managerialism' at both the national and the international level. In particular, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have imposed neo-liberal and managerialist reforms on a number of countries as conditions of aid. New public management has found particular favour with governments in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and New Zealand (see Chapters 1 and 2, this volume). The consensus of opinion regarding managerialist public sector reform has been described by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2000) as the 'Washington Consensus', reflecting the geographical source of many of these ideas. Nevertheless, as Pollitt and Bouckaert have argued, international consensus may be overstated due to the very power of the organisations sponsoring managerialism, and sound research evidence in its favour remains scanty. 'New managerialism' found its most eloquent exponents in Osborne and Gaebler (1992). Proponents of 'new managerialism' have offered a sustained critique of bureaucracy and have put forward a number of 'wish lists' for reform of public sector organisations. These have included:

- Competition between service providers
- Empowering citizens through pushing control out of bureaucracies into communities

- Focussing on outcomes rather than inputs
- Organisations and persons driven by missions and visions not by rules and regulations
- Redefining clients as customers
- Preventing problems before they emerge rather than simply treating them once they have arisen
- Earning money, not just spending it
- Decentralising authority and encouraging participative management
- Using market-type mechanisms rather than bureaucratic techniques and practices
- Catalysing partnerships between public, private and voluntary sectors (Osborne and Gaebler 1992).

Essentially 'new managerialism' offers markets and competition as the solution to all the alleged ills of public sector organisations. Offe (1984) has suggested that, whilst industrial capitalism sees state welfare as inimical to its interests, it cannot do without it. Thus its supporters have through the neo-liberal project sought to delimit the welfare state and remake it in the image of capital. As Carrier (1997) has remarked, the 'market' is a 'bleached' image of capitalism. Public bureaucracies are stereotyped as rigid, rooted in the past and unable to cope with the demands of the global, knowledge-intensive societies created by recent technological and economic changes. The virtues of bureaucracies, in particular their impartiality and defences against corruption, which were emphasised by Weber (1991), are conveniently forgotten. The values of public service which were once seen as important features of public services and the professions come to be derided as traditional and backward looking. Clarke and Newman (1997) have argued that the neo-liberal project has through managerialism colonised the language of opposition and that the concept of empowerment is a case in point. The transformational discourse which positions the market as part of the new and modern creates an 'apparent unity of interests against the old ways' (Clarke and Newman 1997). Thus the 'market' has 'filled the discursive space' and left its opponents literally 'at a loss for words'.

Du Gay (2000) has recently mounted a particularly cogent defence of bureaucracy against its neo-liberal critics. He is one of several authors to point out the fundamental tensions and contradictions inherent in 'new managerialism'. Pollitt and Bouckaert suggest the following contradictions and tensions:

- increase political control of the bureaucracy BUT free managers to manage/empower service consumers
- promote flexibility and innovation BUT increase citizen trust and therefore government legitimacy
- give priority to making savings BUT give priority to improving the performance of the public sector
- 'responsibilise' government BUT reduce the range of tasks that government is involved with
- motivate staff and promote cultural change BUT weaken tenure and downsize
- reduce the burden of internal scrutiny and associated paperwork BUT sharpen managerial accountability
- create more single purpose agencies BUT improve horizontal co-ordination (joined-up government)
- decentralise management authority BUT improve programme co-ordination
- increase effectiveness BUT sharpen managerial accountability
- improve quality BUT cut costs. (Adapted from Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000, Chapter 7.)

Such contradictions could be due to the fundamental incapacity of the market to solve many of the problems of the state (Hood 1998). The anthropologist Mary Douglas has suggested that capitalism was a relative latecomer as a mechanism for ordering human affairs and thus it is rather curious that it should now be seen as part of the natural order of things (Douglas 1986).

In fact, the 'new managerialist' agenda has been dominated by the pressure to do more with less, as governments influenced by the neo-liberal agenda have striven to reduce public expenditure whilst claiming to have increased the quality of public services. Much rhetoric has been expended in justifying the claim to be able to do more with less. For example, public sector workers have been told they do not need to work harder, only smarter. Work intensification has been the most obvious corollary of 'empowerment' for public sector workers in the many countries that have embraced public sector reforms (Foster and Hoggett 1999). Meanwhile, users of public services have come to be characterised as consumers rather than citizens, shifting the focus from collective to individual, and thus more limited, forms of choice.

Empowering patients

The concept of empowerment has played an important role in the reshaping of welfare services by neo-liberal reforms since the 1980s. What has it meant? Firstly, terminology is important. When managers, professionals and politicians talk of empowerment they tell us we must no longer speak of patients but of clients, consumers, stakeholders. The word patient speaks of suffering and must be traded for the language of euphemisation, which masks the reality of bodily suffering. We should ask ourselves whether the sick have a right to claim patienthood, to make the statement: 'I suffer.' Yet more than euphemism is entailed here in this change from suffering patient to empowered consumer. This language constructs the patient in a new relationship to healthcare and confers new duties and responsibilities.

The healthcare literature abounds with literature advocating empowerment. Empowerment is supposed to be about addressing patients' 'strengths and abilities' rather than their 'deficits and needs' (Gibson 1991). Self-care and self-help are central values in patient empowerment.

In common with the fields of general education and personal therapies, health promotion has put to use some of the techniques developed by radical social movements in the 1960s. The techniques of 'consciousness raising' groups were formulated into an explicit educational programme, which were called 'empowerment education', by the radical educationalist Paulo Freire (1972). A number of health promotion projects have been based around these techniques (see, for example, Wallerstein and Bernstein 1988). The fashion for Freire's ideas may have passed, but the techniques have remained. Wallerstein and Bernstein describe five steps to 'facilitate' empowerment:

1. People are asked to describe what they see and feel
2. The group is asked to define the problem
3. People are asked to share experiences in their lives
4. The group is asked to question why the problem exists
5. The group must develop an action plan to address the problem (Wallerstein and Bernstein 1988:383).

In health promotion these methods have been used to address a variety of problems such as drug abuse and teenage sex. Similar

techniques have been used in the workplace in management education and particularly in the promotion of service quality. Freire believed that these techniques would encourage the development of critical consciousness and would make the personal political. In the hands of professional 'facilitators' these techniques are used to encourage individual 'ownership' of the problem; to make the political personal.

The techniques themselves are a very effective method of engaging and enrolling individuals. They operate at the level of the individual but harness the power of the group. In a small group there is very little room to hide or to escape the injunction to contribute personal thoughts, feelings and experiences. Thus 'empowerment education' creates vulnerabilities in individuals. The exchange of confidences creates a pressure to establish mutual trust within the group. Thus there is a pressure to invest in the shared meanings developed by the group.

The professional facilitator plays a critical role in this process. Grace (1991) likens health promotion to marketing. She says that although the health promotion discourse attempts to position the 'community' as being 'in control', the professionals have strong a priori concepts which they employ to direct the groups they deal with. According to Grace two distinct themes emerge from health policy discourse. The first theme is of 'providing and serving'. This implies that control is with 'them', the community. It implies that their 'needs, wants, desires and wishes' precede the provision of services. The second theme is of 'planning, controlling and changing'. This implies that control is with 'us', the managers and professionals. It is our 'plans, visions and missions' that determine the course of action. This is the duality of marketing. According to Grace: 'It is always "them", the customers, who have needs, wants and desires and "us", the providers or marketers, who have plans, targets and goals' (Grace 1991:334).

Freire viewed such activities as manipulation which involved 'depositing myths' that served the powerful in the community. It is ironic that his techniques have been appropriated for just such a purpose.

> It is necessary for the oppressors to approach the people in order to keep them passive via subjugation … it is accomplished by the oppressors depositing myths indispensable to the preservation of

> the status quo; for example, the myth that the oppressive order is a 'free society', the myth that all men are free to work where they wish, that if they don't like their boss they can leave him and look for another job; the myth that this order respects human rights and is therefore worthy of esteem, the myth that anyone who is industrious can become an entrepreneur. (Freire 1972:109)

Perhaps the healthcare 'consumer' is another such myth, a sign of the commodification of health. In becoming consumers of healthcare, patients are encouraged to take active responsibility for their health. Empowerment programmes often promote self-care and reconstruct the health professional as a facilitator or advisor rather than a carer. Hence there has been a growth in advisory services such as telephone helplines and web sites, often in an attempt to replace personal care. (In the United Kingdom, NHS Direct, for example, is intended to replace many home visits by GPs).

Empowerment encourages patients to make choices, but usually these are choices which lessen demand on health services. A stark example of this is the promotion of Advance Directives (otherwise known as 'Living Wills'). In the United States the right to refuse life-saving treatment is enshrined in the Patient Self-Determination Act. The Act was passed following an urgent debate concerning the high cost of dying. Health economists were employed to calculate the cost savings that the Act could produce for corporate healthcare (Scitovsky 1994). There is no similar legal right to demand life-saving care.

A number of recent commentators have drawn attention to the ways in which industries (particularly retail and service industries) have tried to increase profit margins by shifting costs onto consumers. Gilliatt, Fenwick and Alford (2000) describe the discursive creation of the 'responsible consumer' who has to be persuaded to shoulder new costs and responsibilities. Companies have achieved this largely by putting the customer to work. Ritzer (1996) gives us the example of fast-food outlets which expect us to serve ourselves and clear our own tables. Manufacturers have shifted costs by, for example, selling furniture 'flat packed' for home assembly. To help us, we may be given a set of impenetrable instructions and a telephone helpline. Cost shifting is justified by appealing to ideas of economy, convenience, flexibility and consumer responsibility. Empowerment is part of the route to a similar process of cost shifting in welfare services and can be seen in the increase in day

surgery and telephone services such as NHS Direct. Empowerment may be one factor in the creation of a new 'flat-packed' healthcare. Interestingly one UK health policy analyst recently advocated that health services have an 'anti-bureaucrat week', in which health service managers copy the managers of IKEA and 'do the equivalent of helping customers to load flat packs into their cars' (Dixon 2000). Thus empowerment has delivered little transfer of power but considerable transfer of responsibility to individual patients and their families. It has demanded that individuals 'own' their health problems and become self-reliant, thus reducing their demands on the state.

Empowering workers

I have suggested that empowerment usually does not entail any real transfer of power to the 'consumers' of services and that the empowerment project is often one of euphemisation disguising cuts in services and the transfer of responsibility onto service users.

The call for consumer empowerment has been accompanied by a similar call for the empowerment of workers. Calls for worker empowerment are often linked to calls for workers to become 'closer' to consumers and for them to develop a heightened sense of service commitment (Peters and Waterman 1982). Empowerment is linked to workers' increased dedication to the goals of their employers, which is said to lead to a situation in which 'everyone is a winner'.

Calls for worker empowerment have accompanied a period of high unemployment, job insecurity and work intensification. The last 20 years have seen substantial restructuring of the economy, with a general trend in which the domination of manufacturing industries has been replaced by the domination of service industries and the financial sector (Beynon 1997). Steelworks have been replaced by shopping and leisure centres. During this period many organisations have restructured by downsizing and delayering. Managers in the private sector have justified these changes by invoking the need to achieve a competitive edge in a global marketplace. In the public sector these changes have been driven by the need to reduce public expenditure. Pressures to intensify workloads have often stemmed from the desire to reduce expenditure whilst at the same time avoiding a politically damaging fall in standards of public service. Services have been under pressure to 'do more with less' (Foster and Hoggett 1999).

Empowerment has been seen as an important idea for sustaining worker commitment in a period of instability. Restructuring and downsizing have faced workers with the realisation that employers' commitment to their workforce had diminished (Heery and Salmon 2000). Empowerment was supposed to be the magic spell which turned insecurity and threat into opportunity and challenge. Workers could no longer expect a job for life, but a new dawn beckoned of portfolio working and flexible employment.

As Collins (1994) has suggested, it is difficult to be against empowerment. It is a concept that has intuitive legitimacy. Collins argues that the rhetoric of empowerment is underpinned by the logic of disempowerment. This is in part due to the fact that it is as we have seen an individualistic concept. Empowerment programmes have been used to undermine collectivism in the workplace and in the USA have played an important part in the derecognition of trade unions.

> The model of empowerment popular among management audiences turns on individual commitment to managerial goals, to quality, to being accountable for your personal contribution and to being involved through your work … it is a model which says very little about workers' rights and interests, preferring instead to speak of workers' responsibilities to work with management to achieve business goals. (Collins 1997:25)

Harley (1999) identifies three features associated with the 'empowerment thesis'. Empowerment involves the delegation of responsibility from management to employees, non-hierarchical forms of work organisation (flattened organisational structures and teamworking) and the sharing of information between different levels in the organisation. Cunningham, Hyman and Baldry (1996) suggest that empowerment has become a 'major buzzword' and that it has two identifiable strands. Firstly, at the level of the individual it implies that personal success is achieved by a restructuring of attitudes (to achieve the sense of 'self-mastery', 'commitment', etc., mentioned earlier). Secondly, it is a strategy for redistributing power and responsibility within organisations. The general trend is to centralise power whilst increasing downward accountability in order to resist accountability at the top (Day and Klein 1987; Power 1997).

Several empirical studies have indicated that empowerment programmes are zealous in their attempts to impose increased employee responsibility and commitment, but recalcitrant when it

comes to the redistribution of power (Cunningham *et al.* 1996; Foster and Hoggett 1999; Harley 1999; Waddington and Whitston 1996).

As with patients, we see that empowerment entails an increase in responsibility with no corresponding increase in power. In fact Cunningham, Hyman and Baldry (1996) suggest that empowerment can often lead to 'influence impoverishment'. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* records next to 'empower' the word 'empover' meaning to 'make poor, to impoverish'. Perhaps this would be a more apposite term for what is called empowerment.

I will illustrate these points by a brief description of the empowerment of health service workers. Health service work in the United Kingdom, as in many other countries, has been characterised over the last two decades by the progressive intensification of work. Hospital beds in the United Kingdom have been cut by 34 per cent since 1981, a loss of 120,000 (see Department of Health 2000 for a recent detailed analysis of hospital bed numbers). Patients progress through the system 'sicker and quicker'. During this period expenditure on healthcare has failed to keep pace with demand, as UK expenditure on health has fallen in comparison with its European counterparts.

This period has also been accompanied by sweeping structural and cultural change through successive reorganisations and the influence of the new managerialism in public services. We are supposed to see these changes as indicative of a more democratic organisation with flat structures and empowered workers. The reality is somewhat different to the rhetoric. In the community, staff groups are organised into 'self-managing' teams with a team leader. In hospitals, ward sisters have been renamed ward managers and must manage their ward team as well as their ward budget.

This version of empowerment has been necessitated by substantial delayering, which has removed much of the middle tier in many public services. Managerial duties are thus delegated to front-line staff. These changes have in part been a mechanism for tightening financial control over front-line service workers who are now accountable for the expenditure of their budgets. Thus front-line service workers such as nurses are conscripted into the day-to-day implicit rationing decisions which have dominated public services in an era of retrenchment. Whenever they change an incontinent patient, the question of cost must now enter their calculations. Yet at the same time the doctrine of empowerment urges workers to accept (celebrate even) individual accountability for their actions.

Health professionals who have been used to judging their actions by a code of professional ethics must learn to think in new ways. In Marxist terms, they must learn to replace use values with exchange values in their dealings with patients.

Thus empowerment has increased the burden on front-line health workers, and this is reflected in high levels of stress and low morale (Borrill *et al*. 1998). Greater responsibilities have not been accompanied by any increase in power and control. Managerial responsibilities that are devolved to front-line staff tend to become more rigidly codified. Recent managerial trends point to increased formalisation as organisations create more and more paper trails to secure tighter control over front-line service workers (Power 1997). Health workers speak bitterly of drowning in a sea of paper. Flattened organisational structures do not imply increased contact between workers and managers. Many front-line staff say that managers have become increasingly remote. In some areas staff have coined the phrase 'seagull managers' to describe managers who are usually absent and 'only appear when there is something wrong'.

Front-line service workers may feel helpless in the face of intensifying work pressures, increased responsibilities and a vast and increasing mountain of paperwork. Yet at critical junctures they will be reminded that they are empowered workers. This will be the moment when their elusive manager appears because something has gone wrong. Maybe someone has made an error out of sheer fatigue or a 'customer' has complained about the decline in service. It is at these moments that empowered workers are forcibly reminded that it is they who are accountable. As Cunningham, Hyman and Baldry (1996) have noted, empowerment is inextricably wedded to blame.

Thus in healthcare services in the UK, empowerment means the decentralisation of responsibility and a concomitant centralisation of power. Studies in the United States, Australia and Europe have found similar patterns of control and responsibility. Tightening managerial control of the workforce accompanied by an attempt to enforce increased employee commitment and accountability characterises empowerment. For front-line health workers it has meant worsening conditions of work, increased workloads and loss of control.

Empowerment has been an important part of the conceptual toolkit of the New Right. It serves much the same function as self-help did in the days of Samuel Smiles. Despite an apparently changing political climate it maintains its position as a popular

buzzword, justifying and disguising cuts in welfare services and tightening managerial control of the workplace.

Guide to further reading

Readers who would like to read more are recommended particularly to Clarke and Newman (1997), Hood (1998) and Pollitt and Bouckaert (2000) for recent discussions of public sector reform. The two articles by Collins (1994, 1997) provide good general discussions of empowerment. For discussions of recent changes in work and organisations see Ritzer (1996), Du Gay (2000) and Heery and Salmon (2000).

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10
Stakeholding

Adrian Budd

Stakeholding theory, belonging to a tradition of managed capitalism, developed in response to market-driven neo-liberalism, particularly in Britain. This, it argues, has had negative economic and social consequences, including increased inequality, poverty and antisocial behaviour, declining public services and infrastructure, and a preference for short-term profit-taking over long-term commitment to productive investment. This 'vulture capitalism' corrodes well-being and is potentially destabilising when compared to alternative, more successful stakeholder capitalisms – including (West) Germany, Sweden and Japan. These benefit, according to stakeholding theory, from more inclusive, consensual and long-term social relations, which are embedded in social institutions, including the state.

Yet these stakeholder societies remain capitalist. Any inclusion of labour has been on capital's terms, and exploitation, disguised by an ideology of social partnership, has been central to their success. Meanwhile the capitalist market that stakeholders champion, albeit within limits, is undermining the stakeholder institutions, which are, ultimately, built on the same underlying logic of capital accumulation.

Brief history

Will Hutton's 1995 bestseller *The State We're In* popularised the concept of stakeholding, or stakeholder capitalism, and presented a coherent challenge to the dominant free market, or neo-liberal, trend in British political economy. In the even more liberal United States,

Clinton's first Secretary of State for Labour, Robert Reich, had championed limited stakeholder-style reforms a few years earlier, while Francis Fukuyama, recent herald of capitalism's victory over what passed for communism in the Soviet-style economies, now argued that long-term, trust-based capitalisms are both preferable to and more successful than more individualistic, market-driven versions (Reich 1991, 1992; Fukuyama 1995). In 1996 Tony Blair spoke in favour of 'a stakeholder economy … from which no group or class is set apart or excluded', for, where 'people feel they have no stake in a society, they feel little responsibility towards it and little inclination to work for its success' (1996b). *Stakeholder Capitalism*, the product of a conference at Sheffield University which attracted a number of key academics, appeared in 1997, and in 1999 Hutton's *The Stakeholding Society* was published. Here, it seemed, was a body of ideas which might challenge neo-liberalism, empower people within a more inclusive society and enhance that society's economic performance.

Stakeholding is not always clearly labelled, but certain key ideas are common across a range of like-minded writers. Firstly, that individual well-being is only achievable within robust social structures. Neo-liberal individualism is, therefore, simply wrong to suggest that social problems are essentially individual problems. It is not individual failing but the erosion of supporting social structures and institutions, such as welfare states, that has produced social malaise, fragmentation, division and exclusion, increased poverty, a soaring crime wave and workplace insecurity. A second key idea is that neo-liberalism locks societies into a vicious circle of relative economic decline. Where the pursuit of private interest undermines commitment to companies and the wider society, and where welfare and other social costs are regarded as 'burdens', society becomes gripped by short-term calculations of profit and loss and forfeits opportunities to establish the infrastructural, educational and social requirements for future well-being.

Stakeholding aims 'to build a free, moral, socially cohesive society based on universal membership, social inclusion and organized around the market economy' (Hutton *et al*. 1996:88). It involves 'the widest possible diffusion of responsibility and therefore of power … at the work-place, in the school system, indeed wherever discussion and debate can help to determine common purposes' (Marquand 1988:238–9).

Since national political economies are ensembles of interlocking institutional and social practices, stakeholders propose wholesale economic, social and political reforms. Property rights should be embedded in obligations to a wider community of stakeholders – employees, suppliers, consumers and the social and natural environments in which companies operate. The short-term horizons of Anglo-Saxon shareholders would be extended. For, enhanced by financial and economic deregulation, mobile vulture capital threatens firms with hostile takeovers and fosters short-term profit and dividend maximisation at the expense of long-term investment and company development. The associated hire-and-fire culture, where skills are sacrificed to short-term cost-cutting, would be moderated, allowing for less antagonistic industrial relations and a reordering of the balance between capital and labour. New workplace relations could be based on partnership that would empower workers, encourage commitment to the firm and unlock creativity and dynamism. A wider sense of social commitment, inclusion and empowerment – a sense that people have a stake in society – would be achieved by reversing the erosion of the welfare state and pensions, income redistribution in favour of the poor, and the encouragement of active citizenship.

This tradition of managed capitalism is associated with the so-called 'social', 'negotiated' or 'consensual' capitalisms of continental Europe, especially Sweden and (West) Germany, and Japan whose style of capitalism Hutton refers to as 'peopleism'. Notwithstanding their differences, all have narrower social inequalities than, and have until recently outperformed, their more liberal rivals. Their strength, according to stakeholding theorists, lies in the long-term commitment of banking capital to industry, where banks are frequently represented on company boards, enabling larger companies, their finances secure, to establish long-term relationships with their small and medium-sized suppliers. Freed from short-term profit and dividend maximisation, firms can nurture a climate of trust with their workers and invest in apprenticeship schemes and skills development. German workers' stake is reinforced by a system, known as co-determination, of supervisory boards and works councils, with powers of scrutiny of, and initiative in, company decision making. In Japan, where workers are regarded as company 'members', company unionism, lifetime employment and wages based on seniority rather than merit all contribute, stakeholding

claims, to a worker's stake. Income differentials are moderate compared to the liberal models. Such institutional interconnections (overseen by trade associations and the state) have insulated these economies from the full force of the world market and ensured that they remain different to Britain, which David Coates calls a low-wage 'screwdriver and warehouse economy on the edge of a more prosperous and more corporatist Europe' (2000:48).

These perceptions of stakeholder capitalisms will be analysed later. For now, we need to consider the issue of agency and the implementation of the stakeholder project. Tony Blair's New Labour appeared to offer such agency prior to the 1997 British election, but its subsequent trajectory has had a significant impact on the currency of stakeholder concepts.

Current usage of the stakeholder concept

David Marquand, whose thinking is close to Hutton's, recognised the contradiction between market economies and welfare/income redistribution, for they rest on antagonistic assumptions – one of atomised individualism (a negation of community), the other of community (a negation of individualism) (Marquand 1988:224). Tony Blair, who spoke in favour of stakeholding in January 1996, has, in government, applied the logic of a speech he had made three days earlier: 'A country has to dismantle barriers to competition and accept the disciplines of the international economy' (Blair 1996a).

Certain New Labour measures hint at a stakeholder model, but they have fallen far short of stakeholders' hopes. The minimum wage was set at a derisory level and, according to the Low Pay Commission, without rigorous regulation has been widely abused by employers, whose own pay continues to increase substantially. The government argues that shareholders, rather than itself, should attempt to curb the excesses of senior executives. Concern for business interests was also paramount when Labour negotiated major exclusions from the European Union (EU) working-hours directive, such that the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) claimed that Labour 'deserves credit for turning its business-friendly words into actions' (*Guardian*, 28 July 1999). Similarly Labour's *Fairness at Work* measures are so mild that Blair argues that 'after the changes we propose, Britain will have the most lightly regulated labour market of any leading economy in the world' (1998:1), and constantly calls for greater flexibility in European labour markets.

These formal, but in practical terms minimal, moves towards workplace stakeholding should be seen as a sop to Labour's backers in the trade union leaderships, who have themselves accommodated to the ideological language of social partnership. The employee share schemes outlined in the March 1999 budget would reinforce social partnership, but employment contracts remain determined by capital, in the context of competitive market forces, and the ethos of companies remains profit maximisation. In Ireland, the so-called 'Celtic Tiger', social partnership has been used to hold down wages, in return for largely symbolic representation on the board and tiny amounts of equity, and contributed to a growing social polarisation (Allen 2000). Meanwhile, one development using the language of stakeholding directly contradicts the stakeholder theorists' original intent, namely to challenge neo-liberal emphasis on the market and the erosion of public institutions and services. For, in contemporary Britain stakeholding has been privatised. Major companies, particularly in the intensely competitive financial sector and in a tight labour market, have recognised the value of their most senior employees in their long-run success. To hold on to them, these companies have begun to develop ownership stakeholding, to be achieved not by society-wide reform but by offering senior employees share options. But the interests of less senior employees are not to be similarly protected, for New Labour's original plan to reform company law in line with the stakeholder concept have been abandoned. Shareholder value is to remain dominant. If there is to be stakeholding in the workplace it is not to be enforced by the state as guarantor of social values and demands, but chosen freely by firms facing acute labour shortages and intensified competition.

The one area where the word stakeholder is widely used, namely in government plans to introduce low-overhead stakeholder pensions, targeted at the 11 million Britons who earn between £9,000 and £18,500 a year, conforms to this retreat from stakeholder theorists' intentions. These cheap private pensions are predicated on low pay and worker insecurity, whereby many work part-time and move between jobs more frequently than in the past. That is, they presuppose the perpetuation of the very social problems that stakeholder theory seeks to challenge. Given that the state pension is not to be upgraded in line with earnings, and that the government aims to reduce the state's total contribution to retirement income by one-third by 2050, stakeholder pensions make no contribution to the creation of a stakeholder society.

The stakeholder concept has been subverted and privatised under New Labour. Far from signalling an orchestrated society-wide retreat from neo-liberalism, its limited use has been as ideological cover for a perpetuation of the ascendancy of private capital. Indeed, while the institutions of regulation and inclusion remain underdeveloped, the most significant element of the German model that has been appropriated, Bank of England independence, on the model of the *Bundesbank*, is that which most rigorously imposes capitalist discipline on the 'social partners' while remaining beyond social control. But this retreat from stakeholding should not encourage an idealisation of that which has proved unattainable. For stakeholder theory, however radical it appears in relation to neo-liberalism, is a theory of reformed or managed capitalism and therefore fails to expose the underlying dynamics of exploitation at the heart of all capitalist models.

A critique of the stakeholder models

New Labour's failure to live up to the expectations of stakeholders is an expression of a wider retreat of European social democracy from its original emancipatory and transformative vision to a position of management of capitalism. But if the absence of appropriate political agency is a problem for stakeholder theory, for critics of capitalism there is a more fundamental problem with stakeholding. For its representation of the alternative national capitalist models, from which it draws both theoretical insight and policy proposals, relegates the capital–labour relation from a position of primacy to one of equivalence with other relations, namely capital–capital and capital–state relations. If the capital–labour relation is restored to its rightful position, consistent with the centrality, within capitalism, of the extraction of surplus-value from workers and its accumulation as capital, then, from the point of view of labour, the similarities between capitalist models are, whatever their specific national structures and institutions, more significant than the differences. We can illustrate this by exploring three stages of the stakeholder model: firstly, its origins in Germany and Japan in the immediate post-war years; secondly, its maturity; and thirdly, its contemporary crisis which has forced a restructuring whose costs are borne by the working class.

The origins of the stakeholder model in Germany and Japan

Wars tend to reopen what were assumed to be closed issues and pose questions over the way societies are run – people, when mobilised to fight or produce for the war effort, ask 'What are we fighting for?' This was clearly true at the end of the First World War (the Russian and German revolutions, etc.) and a similar process unfolded after the Second World War, albeit without the same revolutionary conclusions. In the defeated countries of Germany and Japan, despite over a decade of repression under dictatorships, the labour movement demonstrated a remarkable degree of resilience, combativity and radicalisation after 1945, and major political and economic change seemed possible. The origins of what is now presented as the stakeholding model – at least as far as the capital–labour relation is concerned – lie in the manner in which these movements were defeated. Stakeholder claims that labour has a 'voice' within these systems must be highly qualified.

In the immediate post-war years, the German working class (soon to be divided between east and west by Cold War bipolarity) made a series of radical demands for the peace. Already in the spring of 1945 antifascist committees (*Antifas*) and workers' councils had begun a process of de-Nazification, restarted production, and taken over Nazi party buildings and town halls in an attempt to restore civilian rule. Their demands – including widespread nationalisation and codetermination at all levels of society – aimed to place the labour movement at the centre of the post-war order. But they clashed with the priorities of the western occupying allies and domestic capitalist forces – which were to reconstruct traditional state power and the rule of private capital. The more radical *Antifas* were soon banned as the occupying forces began to re-establish the safer channels of constitutional politics, and labour movement organisations were removed from the positions of responsibility they had assumed with the collapse of the Nazi state. Where laws over workers' participation or nationalisation contradicted capital's aims, the occupying forces simply ignored or suspended them. Thus, when a US-inspired referendum on nationalisation in Hessen produced a 72 per cent vote in favour, the occupation authorities prohibited its implementation, and in 1948 General Clay dissolved the co-ordinating council for the US occupation zone over the question of codetermination. Meanwhile, the occupation was prepared to work with known Nazis, some of whom were appointed as mayors or kept in post in private industry and state bodies. The liberation of Germany was to mean freedom to operate a more liberal form of

capitalism than the one that preceded it. Thus, when codetermination did materialise it was a pale shadow of what had originally been anticipated. Codetermination, and particularly the Works Council Law of 1952,

> was an important defeat for the trade unions in that it not only denied full parity of workers' representatives in the management of companies, it also virtually excluded the trade unions from the shop floor. (Berger 1995:84)

The key components of codetermination were established in a series of laws enacted between 1951 and 1955, which created a system of supervisory boards and works councils across West German industry. The demand for national codetermination was ignored, but Germany's rulers were careful to present these arrangements in the ideological language of 'social partnership' – language that has given weight to the stakeholder claim that workers have a voice in German industrial relations. But, while it is true that the balance of class forces was such that labour could not be simply atomised and cowed, that same balance ensured that strict limits were placed on the independent assertion of labour's interests.

Supervisory boards, where workers' representatives hold only one-third of seats, were obliged to prioritise company viability. Communication between workers' representatives on both supervisory boards and works councils and the workforce was to be limited. Works councils were established within individual firms and, although elected by workers, were independent of the unions, so restricting their workplace influence, and concerned chiefly with working conditions and company interests. They were to become organs of industrial peace, unable to negotiate over pay or call strikes. The labour movement was thus doubly fractured: horizontally between industries and companies and vertically between rank-and-file workers on the one hand and representatives and trade union officials on the other. There was, in the post-war conditions of expansion, a developing consensus in German industrial relations, but it was chiefly between the state, capital and the trade union leadership. Rank-and-file initiative was limited by state action/legislation and the union bureaucracy.

Stakeholder theory sometimes suggests that the capital–labour relation in Japan reflects abiding cultural characteristics – especially Confucian notions of social harmony, trust and long-term

commitment. Yet, in the early twentieth century Japan operated a more market-based capitalism of fierce competition, hostile takeovers in the interests of short-term shareholders, high labour turnover and flexibility. Its failure in the late 1920s and early 1930s forced the ruling military dictatorship to establish a 'New Economic System' that limited shareholders' rights, curtailed dividends and bound labour to capital, via semi-fascist corporate 'unions', in a national mobilisation for productivity and war. The establishment of the post-war system of capital–labour relations reflected anything but a search for social harmony. In Japan, the features praised by stakeholder theorists

> represent the triumph of corporate power over what was in the early postwar period a powerful, militant, heavily communist trade union movement. (Tabb 1995:154)

Events closely paralleled those in Germany. There was a huge wave of worker militancy, including strikes and factory occupations, which resisted dismissals and won significant wage increases and improvements in working conditions. Union density rose from zero in 1945 to nearly 60 per cent four years later and, as in Germany, soviet-type organisations appeared in a number of places. The US occupying forces, which had arrived with the message of 'democratisation', initially encouraged the spread of unionisation. But with the onset of the Cold War in Europe and then the fall of the Chiang Kai-shek regime in China, the US and Japanese ruling classes reassessed their attitudes. Union militants, especially Communist Party members, were purged, the general unions were split, and company unions, of which there are now over 70,000, established. Their priorities, according to slogans adopted by the Nissan company union in 1953, included: 'Those who love the union love the company'; 'Fight for wages that promote the desire to work'; 'Guarantee a wage based on productivity increases'; and 'Destroy the "kept union" that is tied to the Japanese Communist Party'.

As with the particular form of German codetermination, so Japan's 'traditional' style of management – involving company unions, lifetime employment and wages based on seniority rather than merit – was built upon the containment and defeat of the labour movement. Post-war radicalisation had contained the embryo of a future society that would express and represent workers' interests. Now, however, those interests would be squeezed into institutional

structures that were designed to ensure compliance with capital's goals.

The stakeholder systems in maturity

West Germany and Japan experienced great post-war economic success, supported, it must be said, by the bogey of stakeholding, the United States, which provided economic aid, technology, military spending and open markets in the interests of bloc solidarity during the Cold War. Stakeholder elements, such as the long-term relations between banks and industry, between industrial companies and their suppliers, and between state institutions and private capital, contributed to this success. But the fruits of this success were far from evenly distributed.

The West German boom was initially built upon low wages and while, over the first two post-war decades, workers' living standards rose in absolute terms, their share of national wealth fell as huge productivity increases worked to the benefit of capital. At the same time, as the long boom, lasting from 1945 to the early 1970s, produced full employment and labour shortages, *Gastarbeiter* ('guest workers' recruited from the Mediterranean countries, such as Turkey) faced the most appalling and racist treatment, to which the state contributed via quite draconian legislation, such as the 1965 Foreigners' Law (Dale 1999). Economic success did, however, produce an improvement in labour's bargaining power, and employers made concessions over pay, conditions and non-wage costs such as sick pay. The state meanwhile began to increase social spending which, again contrary to the impression given by stakeholder theorists, had been low in comparison with other advanced countries. But these concessions and spending increases coinciding with the return of economic problems internationally as growth slowed in the late 1960s, German capital again sought to restrain costs. Only now was national level codetermination instituted, in what was called 'concerted action' between employers, unions and the state, but its aim, far from developing workers' stake in society, was to limit wage rises. And when the faltering boom turned into full-blown recession in the 1970s it became clear that the gains German workers had made over the previous decade had been a result of capitalist growth. As that growth evaporated the Social Democrat (SPD) government, like its Labour counterpart in Britain, took the first steps on the long march, not towards an alternative form of society better equipped to

provide for human needs, but towards welfare retrenchment and, ultimately, more liberal arrangements in the interests of capital.

> The greatest contributing factor for Japanese economic growth was the favourable conditions in the labour market for firms and the resulting relatively cheap labour in comparison with increasing productivity or with labour costs in other advanced capitalist countries. (Itoh 1990:274)

Japanese capital also benefited from relatively low wages, helped by the earlier defeat and fragmentation of the labour movement. Thus, for example, in the wave of post-war militancy the seniority principle and lifetime employment for skilled males had been forced upon capital by a labour movement keen to establish secure and stable employment. Later, however, they were retained as rational management strategies to atomise workers and integrate them over the long term into the aims of the company, breeding an instrumental company loyalty and commitment to company success, and tying workers' long-term income prospects to the performance of 'their' firms. But this only ever applied to some one-third of Japanese workers, working for that tiny minority of big companies and banks at the heart of the system. The majority, representing a huge buffer to absorb unemployment and job insecurity during economic downturns, worked in more flexible peripheral firms and experienced much lower wage rates and poorer working conditions. Contrary to common perceptions of Japan, self-employment using unpaid family labour, especially that of women, accounts for about one-third of the labour force, compared to about 10 per cent in the US and Britain, and small firms, with fewer than 30 workers, account for more than half of the labour force. These small suppliers are tied to larger firms by the sort of long-term contracts that stakeholder theorists welcome and which have provided a measure of company security. But it is their flexibility and low-wages that have kept the costs of the giant corporations down.

There is little about Japanese post-war success that can be explained by the sort of culturalist arguments favoured by some stakeholder theorists. These generally ignore the extent to which dominant cultural patterns express ruling-class interests and work against those of workers. Instead we must reassert the centrality of exploitation in that success. Where, elsewhere, labour was able to shift the balance of class forces in its favour during the long boom,

Japanese company unions remained tools of capital. Thus, Japanese workers work by far the longest hours in the advanced countries, have the shortest holidays (and take only about half their average 17 days per year), and only about half the workforce regularly take a full two-day weekend. Not surprisingly, some 10,000 workers die from overwork (*karoshi*) annually.

Contemporary trends in the stakeholder societies

The origins and mature operation of the post-war models of capital–labour relations in West Germany and Japan undermine stakeholder claims about social inclusion and worker voice. But national institutional structures and social practices were not only forged in the context of, but are also subject to change in relation to, shifting balances of class forces, and labour did gain a degree of institutional voice internationally from the late 1960s. In Germany via concerted action; in France after 1968 where there were moves towards what was called the 'social democratisation' of industrial relations; in Britain where the unions were instrumental in defeating the 1970–74 Conservative government and then incorporated under Labour's social contract; in Spain after Franco's death, via a series of pacts between business, unions and the state. But it was the union bureaucracies, standing between capital and labour, that were incorporated and in return were expected to control workers' militancy and moderate wage demands. Once these efforts had helped restabilise capitalism by the late 1970s, capital again attempted to shift the balance of forces in its favour, even where the formal mechanisms of corporatism remained in place. Against the background of changes in the international capitalist environment, often referred to as 'globalisation', this process has intensified in the 1990s and dealt a further blow to the stakeholding thesis.

German capital has raised fears about Germany's future as an industrial location (the *Standort Deutschland* debate), ex-Chancellor Kohl telling Germans that their economy was a 'collective leisure park' before announcing welfare cuts amounting to 2 per cent of GDP in 1996. Resistance defeated these measures and when, in 1998, the SPD returned to office, there was a sense that workers' earlier gains might be protected from further erosion. But, just as New Labour, far from being a vehicle for stakeholding, treads the same liberal path as its predecessors, and Robert Reich's faith in Clinton proved to be both misplaced and shortlived, so in Germany liberal economic ideas have taken deeper root. Blair's 'Third Way' is

paralleled by SPD leader Gerhard Schroeder's talk of *die Neue Mitte* (the new centre) and warning that globalisation requires 'comprehensive economic and social modernization' (Schroeder 1998:11). Modernisation has thus far entailed welfare cuts and pensions reform to reduce the long-term pensions 'burden'.

> States must become the instruments for adjusting national economic activities to the exigencies of the global economy – states are becoming transmission belts from the global into the national economic spheres. Adjustment to global competitiveness is the new categorical imperative. (Cox 1993:260)

Parties' electoral concerns and wider considerations of legitimacy and stability militate against a rapid dismantling of *Modell Deutschland*. But, while the Schroeder Government bailed out the giant construction company Philipp Holzmann in 1999, saving up to 60,000 jobs, the short-termism associated with shareholder value and marketisation is having an increasing impact. The SPD has abolished capital gains tax on the sale of assets, allowing banks, which face growing global competition from financial operators based in more deregulated settings such as London and New York, to divest themselves of industrial holdings and redirect resources to higher return investments and international acquisitions. Vodafone's successful hostile takeover of Mannesmann, opposed by the works council, management and Schroeder, is likely, therefore, to signal a developing trend, and while over two-thirds of Germany's listed companies are still controlled by one or two shareholders short-term shareholder value seems set to lever long-term stakeholding aside. The consequences could be a fundamental recasting of German long-termism, especially if the EU Commission upholds the private sector European Banking Federation's claim against state support for Germany's public sector banks.

Capital–labour relations also face restructuring. Codetermination has helped smooth the passage of change – involving the shedding of jobs, the reorganisation of work-time, productivity increases and reductions in indirect costs – and wide sections of German industry continue to see collective bargaining as an important contribution to industrial stability and competitiveness. Some 90 per cent of German workers are still covered by union–employer contracts, compared with one-fifth in the US and just less than half in Britain. Contrary to neo-liberal prejudices, flexibility is possible within the

German system – over two-fifths of Europe's top 150 internet companies are German compared with less than one-fifth which are British, and where German business was concerned in the 1980s that it was falling behind in the new industries – IT, telecommunications and biotechnology – it has been able to develop in these areas with remarkable speed. German industry has reported spectacular productivity gains in a trade-off for shorter hours and an increase in work intensity; DaimlerChrysler Aerospace (Dasa) workers on the Eurofighter, for example, work six-hour shifts with just a 2.5 minute 'comfort break'.

Such flexibility is conditional upon not only a compliant union leadership, but also worker insecurity where unemployment has hovered around 10 per cent throughout the 1990s. Yet, even compliant union bureaucrats can be subject to rank-and-file pressure and, such is the scale of international capitalist restructuring, larger companies most exposed to international competition have become more selective in using codetermination and prepared to abandon it when it is deemed unhelpful for competitiveness. Company- and plant-level agreements have increased, supervisory board influence has diminished, and around half of west German metal industry companies have left the metal employers' federation (*Gesamtmetall*) thereby undermining industry-wide agreements with the unions. These developments are associated with a marked shift of industry towards the east, which remains disadvantaged a decade after reunification: unemployment has consistently hovered around 20 per cent, working hours are longer, and wages are lower, even where the employer belongs to the relevant national employers' federation. Union concessions to capital's demands, designed to protect eastern jobs, have enabled capital to threaten western workers with a further easternisation of industry. At the same time, Germany's largest companies have shifted production to lower-cost sites abroad, in eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America, for example. German co-determination, whether or not its formal mechanisms have been retained, is under pressure and being slowly abandoned.

Similar restructuring processes are under way in other stakeholder models. Japanese industry has been moving offshore to low-cost neighbours in east Asia; lifetime employment in core companies has been eroded as unemployment has reached record post-war levels; major companies have reduced their holdings in traditional sister firms; banks have developed more short-term and arms-length relations with industry, in part due to massive bad debts – overall, a

question-mark has been placed over the value to capital of embeddedness in long-term national structures. Post-war Sweden was noted for its welfare state (the 'people's home'), national collective bargaining, and solidaristic wage-setting, whereby the most productive internationally oriented companies established nationally applicable wages giving the whole system an incentive towards investment and productivity increases. But, once the world system returned to crisis in the 1970s, big capital began to campaign against public spending and welfare, to move towards local bargaining, and to shift production abroad. Arguing that the EU's 1992 single-market programme endangered non-members' industry and welfare, big capital campaigned for membership, but Sweden's subsequent membership has become a rationale for further attacks on the post-war class compromise, widening inequality, and such major welfare restructuring that, for some commentators at least, the 'people's home' has been destroyed.

Conclusions

Capitalism comes in a variety of national models, depending on class structure, class struggles, their outcomes and their ideological legacies,

> but the result will only be slightly different, because capitalist industrialization imposes a common agenda everywhere, and invites (and triggers) a broadly similar range of responses … all the models are recognizably capitalist. (Coates 2000:142)

Those who argue for a more socially inclusive, equal, regulated, and long-termist form of capitalism have produced frequently trenchant critiques of liberal market capitalism and its destructive and potentially self-destructive tendencies. But, while workers' rights have been weakly protected in free-market systems, nowhere have workers' stakes in capitalist societies been robust or entrenched enough to prevent restructuring in the interests of capital over the last two decades. Indeed, in the so-called stakeholder societies, social partnership and codetermination have often meant little more than the incorporation of trade union leaders to create a legitimising fog of consensus and restrain resistance from workers who have born the costs of restructuring. Given the scale of this restructuring since the 1970s, and the accumulated erosion of the gains workers made during the long post-war boom, stakeholder theorists' critiques of

neo-liberalism produce remarkably flimsy counterproposals. Two reasons for this stand out.

Firstly, their analysis of capitalism fails to locate the central dynamic of that system – namely the exploitation of workers in the competitive pursuit of profit. The capital–labour relation is thus seen as but one of a number of relations, alongside, but not determinant of, capital–capital and state–capital relations. Without the key concept of exploitation, stakeholding is seduced by the superficial form of structures and institutions that appear to give labour voice and influence and, while correctly arguing that labour has been integrated into economic and political life, does not recognise that this has been on terms set by capital, albeit that the shifting balance of class forces has affected those terms. For there are fundamentally conflicting interests 'between employers, for whom wages represent costs to be minimised, and workers, for whom wages represent income to be maximised' (Leaman 1988:57).

Secondly, stakeholding explores national models from the inside out. But, competitive capital accumulation is a global process whose logic drives each capitalist to maximise exploitation and profits. This process is mediated and hindered by state institutions which, subject as they are to popular pressures that frequently contradict capitalist logic, attempt to legitimise their own national brand of capitalism via measures such as welfare spending and redistribution or by asserting a cultural identity in the face of the disintegrative force of the world market. But the primary purpose of all capitalist states is to secure the conditions for the long-term reproduction of capitalism. Just as a dam cannot stop a river's flow but merely alter its velocity, so, whether they have established liberal market, or stakeholding/corporatist, or authoritarian institutions around the capital–labour relation, all states are ultimately compelled to respect the global flow of the logic of capitalism. None has escaped either periodic international economic crises since the mid-1970s or contemporary pressures to restructure in the face of globalisation, but all have imposed the costs of restructuring disproportionately on the working class.

For the working class, therefore, there is little to choose between national capitalist models, for all combine, in various ways, features that contradict its interests. And the trend everywhere is away from the gains workers made in the long boom and towards greater insecurity and inequality. For there has been a global retreat, not of the state per se but, of what Bourdieu calls its left hand (the traces

of earlier struggles) (1998:1–10). Meanwhile, its right hand (the finance and treasury ministries, central banks, etc., that impose capitalist orthodoxy) has been strengthened. There is little likelihood of this being reversed short of major systemic crisis or class struggle. At this point, social democracy, which long ago abandoned attempts to control capital, may well rediscover stakeholding as a progressive-sounding means to reintegrate, and thereby control, labour. Those who seek real change, however, must lift their gaze beyond the narrow horizons of capitalism, in whatever form. Only with the transcendence of capitalism will humanity's productive potential be married to appreciation of human need, and only then will Ruskin's concerns become historical curiosities. For:

> It is a good and desirable thing truly to make many pins in a day. But if we could only see with what crystal sand their points are polished – sand of human soul – we should think there might be some loss in it also. We blanch cotton and strengthen steel and refine sugar and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine or to form a single living spirit never enters into our estimate of advantage. (Ruskin n.d.:151)

Guide to further reading

Will Hutton's (1995) *The State We're In* is essential reading. A trenchant critique of free-market economics and the neo-liberal state, and a sophisticated statement of the stakeholder alternative, it provoked intense debate on both right and left. David Marquand (1988) is equally stimulating and readable. But stakeholding cannot escape the problems and contradictions of capitalism, of which it is one variant. David Coates (2000) presents a very useful synthesis of a vast range of academic research on different national models of capitalism and repays careful reading. Adrian Budd (1997) is more specific, criticising the stakeholder thesis from a Marxist perspective, while Martin Upchurch (1999) provides a helpful analysis of the German model and its contemporary problems. Jeremy Leaman (1988) provided a standard critical text on the West German political economy for many years, and although it only covers the post-war period up to 1985 it remains important as a counter to stakeholding's more grandiose (and sometimes ahistorical) claims for the German model. Makito Itoh (1990) renders a similar service for Japan. Finally, Marxist introductions to capitalist economics pose

fundamental questions of the analytical categories used by supporters of stakeholding: Francis Green and Bob Sutcliffe (1987) and Chris Harman (1995) are good places to start.

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11
Social Capital

Georgina Blakeley

Social capital crept into the collective consciousness of academics in the 1990s hot on the heels of similar concepts such as civil society, which focussed upon the importance of societal activity as a supplement to, or indeed often a replacement for, state activity. This chapter argues, however, that social capital is 'much ado about nothing'. It does not add anything more to the debates than prior concepts such as civil society do, for the reasons behind its appearance are more to do with ideology than conceptual utility. In sum, social capital encapsulates the dominant neo-liberal agenda characterised by a reduction in the power of the state and a corresponding increase in the responsibilities of society itself.

Defining social capital

Most concepts in the social sciences are subject to what Sartori labelled 'travelling' and 'stretching'; social capital is no exception (Sartori 1970). However, unlike many of the other concepts in this volume, we cannot explain social capital's elasticity by pointing to a long historical trajectory; social capital is a fairly new concept.

Amongst the earliest pioneers of the term social capital were community reformers such as Hanifan who wrote about the importance of social capital for explaining successful schools, the urbanist Jane Jacobs, the economist Glenn Loury and the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Hanifan 1916; Jacobs 1961; Loury 1977; Bourdieu 1983).

More recently, the popularity of the term can be accredited to two theorists – James Coleman and Robert Putnam. Coleman, regarded as one of the Founding Fathers of social capital, aimed to explain social behaviour by combining the insights of the economists' 'principle of rational action' with the sociologists' emphasis on social organisation (1988:97). In short, 'social capital constitutes a particular kind of resource available to an actor' (1988:98).

> Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors ... within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence. Like physical and human capital, social capital is not completely fungible, but is fungible with respect to specific activities. A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others. (Coleman 1988:98)

Coleman's definition of social capital thus 'captures social structure at large, as well as the ensemble of norms governing interpersonal behaviour' (World Bank 1998:2). He also differentiates social capital from other forms of capital, saying that 'Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors. It is not lodged either in the actors themselves or in physical implements of production' (Coleman 1988:98).

Whilst Putnam's definition of social capital is narrower than Coleman's, it is one of the most accepted. Putnam writes that:

> Social capital refers to features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. (Putnam 1995:67)

Other authors such as Newton (1999) recommend breaking down the concept of social capital into its constituent elements: firstly, social capital as a set of norms and values, relating primarily to trust, reciprocity and co-operation, in other words, what the eighteenth-century French theorist de Tocqueville referred to as the 'habits of

the heart'. Second, social capital as a range of social networks of individuals, groups and organisations; namely, the huge and diverse range of organisations and associations that operate in that part of society which is neither family, nor market, nor state. And, finally, social capital as a set of outcomes produced by these norms and networks.

As can be seen, the literature which uses social capital is not only recent, it is also disparate and encompasses many academic disciplines. This, rather than a long history, explains the 'stretching' that social capital has suffered. Indeed, the different perspectives on social capital often result from differences between discrete disciplines. Political scientists tend to concentrate on analysing networks and organisations, sociologists and anthropologists tend to concentrate on analysing norms, whilst economists tend to concentrate on analysing contracts and institutions.

Current usage

The diversity in the definitional scope of social capital is also reflected in the virtues attributed to it. To concentrate on the most prominent: social capital is credited with making democracy work (Putnam 1993), enhancing economic growth and prosperity (Fukuyama 1995), reducing school drop-out rates (Coleman 1988), sustaining development (World Bank 1998), tackling social exclusion (Blair 1998), providing health benefits (Putnam 2000) and improving the economic role and performance of rotating savings and credit associations (Besley *et al*. 1993).

However, we should not stretch this diversity too far. Whatever the complexity or specificity of any given definition, they all seem to agree, as Deth points out, that social capital has both a structural aspect in the sense of networks and a cultural aspect in the sense of norms and social trust (Deth 2000:122). The structural aspect of social capital is generally to be found in the world of voluntary associations. The cultural aspect of social capital is to be found in social norms and values, particularly that of trust.

From the point of view of the utility of social capital, what stands out immediately from this definitional literature is the extent to which it echoes the pluralist paradigm of the 1950s and 1960s, as the following table illustrates:

	Structural Aspect	*Cultural Aspect*	*Outcomes*
Pluralism (1960s)	Interest Groups	Civic Culture	Economic prosperity and liberal democracy
Social Capital (1990s)	Networks of civic engagement	Norms of trust and reciprocity	Economic prosperity and liberal democracy

The motivation behind both paradigms is also similar. Almond and Verba's earlier study aimed to connect political culture to democracy by demonstrating how the pattern of attitudes and beliefs they labelled the 'civic culture' underpinned the stability and effectiveness of liberal democratic polities. Putnam's own work centres on a construct, which he calls the 'civic community', the existence or absence of which, is the key to explaining variations in government performance. Like its pluralist predecessor, however, social capital shares a similar set of problems, which when taken together, can be labelled 'a retreat from politics'.

Critique

The retreat from politics

As many critics have pointed out, much social capital theory is characterised by the absence of politics. Echoing a long tradition of pluralist analysis, Putnam fears the over-politicisation of associational life and 'downplays or rejects the role of specifically political associations and movements in his portrait of the "civil community"' (Foley and Edwards 1996:45). On a similar note, Skocpol accuses Putnam of 'Tocqueville romanticism' that assumes that 'spontaneous social association is primary while government and politics are derivative' (Skocpol 1996:20–5). However, rather than an absence of politics per se, it would be more accurate to talk about an absence of a certain kind of politics, namely that which envisages a substantial and constructive role for the state.

The second key criticism of much of the social capital literature is precisely that it is society-centred. Like their pluralist predecessors who put particular weight on the processes creating, and resulting from, individuals combining their efforts in groups in the competition for power, social capital theorists place the stress on the

interactions within civil society and the outcomes produced by such interactions. Levi ventures that 'the stress of Putnam's book is on civil society and how the interactions within it are the source, indeed the root cause of, effective government' (Levi 1996:50). Fukuyama's book *Trust*, which shares the contemporary radical right's suspicion of the state, also leaves little room for a government role in producing social capital. To be fair to Putnam, he does acknowledge in his later work on the United States that governments too may be an important source of social capital; however, the major source of social capital still remains intermediate associations.

The neglect of class and gender

In addition to a careless disregard for politics and the role of the state, the social capital theorists also pay little attention to the class nature of liberal democratic polities. According to Skocpol, amongst others, this results in a 'romanticism of community'. Definitions of social capital that see it as 'the cement of civil society' or the 'shared norms and values that bind individuals together' ignore the inherently conflictive nature of civil society and the essentially antagonistic relationship between classes and other groups in civil society (Deth *et al.* 1999:xv). In reality, just as Schattschneider (1960) famously claimed that the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent, Hall maintains in the case of Britain today that:

> We should not let the relatively good aggregate figures for social capital confuse us into summoning up the image of a polity uniformly criss-crossed by organisational networks and participatory citizens. The more accurate image is of a nation divided between a well-connected and highly-active group of citizens with generally prosperous lives and another set of citizens whose associational life and involvement in politics are very limited. (Hall 1999:455)

In addition, Lowndes (2000) points out that whilst Hall's analysis focusses on class and generational effects in explaining the distribution of social capital and the kinds of social capital available to different groups in society, he is silent on gender dynamics. Lowndes argues that the focus of the social capital debate has been disproportionately directed at male-dominated activities:

> Of the Italian local associations considered by Putnam, 73 per cent were sports clubs whilst only 1 per cent concerned health and social services. Hall considers in detail trends in pub attendance in Britain (where men still spent twice as much time as women in 1984), whilst relegating to a footnote increases in time spent on childcare. Like other commentators on social capital, Hall effectively disregards an entire sphere of relevant activity – that is, the social networks that involve parents (almost universally mothers) in their roles as child-carers. (Lowndes 2000:534)

A disregard for social class and other factors like gender that structure inequality in liberal democratic polities leaves little room to distinguish between the different forms of social capital used by different groups and, indeed, little room to discern differences in the importance attached to social capital by different groups. Coleman points out, for example, that 'there are differences in the actual needs that persons have for help, in the existence of other sources of aid (such as government welfare services), in the degree of affluence (which reduces aid needed from others)' (Coleman 1988:103). Similarly, Grootaert points out that co-operative activities, such as 'growing food, repairing houses, and exchanging help with friends', in a well-functioning market economy 'may be a hobby or a reflection of friendship', whilst in many developing economies they may be literally a matter of life or death (Grootaert 1998:7). In short, whilst social capital may be used to compensate for a lack of physical and financial capital amongst poor people, this should not in any way be seen as a substitution for the latter. Remarks like Collier's that 'the poor may choose to rely more upon social capital than the better off' imply an element of positive freedom that such social sectors clearly lack (Collier 1998:24).

The weakness of causality

Finally, just as Almond and Verba were criticised for the lack of precise explanatory mechanisms linking culture to political structure, causal mechanisms also remain largely obscure and unconvincing in the case of social capital. Levi, amongst others, questions 'the causal chain between bird-watching and political activism' (Levi 1996:49). In other words, although there may be a correlation between the norms and networks of civic engagement and the existence of good government, Putnam does not produce 'a theory

that identifies the mechanisms of production, maintenance and growth of social capital' (Levi 1996:46).

Again, as Lowndes claims, feminist analysis could help lead the way here. She writes that 'the social capital debate has much to learn from the existing literature on women's unorthodox routes to political engagement' that highlight the 'spillover' from women's 'non-political' community or neighbourhood activity to the formal political arena: 'Feminist political theory has long focused on what should become a central issue for the social capital debate – that is, the relationship between the "small democracies" of everyday life and the "big democracy" of political parties and organised government' (Lowndes 2000:537).

This lack of causal specificity, however, is perhaps not surprising. Social capital theory shares with its pluralist predecessors, and liberal theorists before that, a tendency to take for granted the way in which the beneficial effects of people associating to maximise their common interests produce unintended beneficial outcomes. Just as the economist Adam Smith argued in the *Wealth of Nations* in 1776 that under the mechanism of a free market, the pursuit of profit leads each participant to act to the material advantage of society as a whole, as though 'led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention', so too the theorists of social capital underspecify the causal mechanisms by which the social interaction of individuals produces democratic outcomes. Indeed, one of the attractions of social capital for economists is precisely that the economic results produced by social capital are not mediated through the market, and that the economic effect 'is not the primary purpose of the social interaction but is incidental or even unintended' (Collier 1998:2).

Explanations of the correlation between membership of bird-watching societies and soccer groups on the one hand, and high-quality government performance on the other, hinge on what Newton (1999) has labelled the 'internal' and 'external' effects of voluntary organisations, a distinction which Foley and Edwards (1996) had earlier labelled 'Civil Society 1 argument' and 'Civil Society 2 argument'.

> The internal effects of voluntary organisations (or Civil Society 1 argument) emphasise the beneficial effects of membership of voluntary organisation in terms of the levels of trust and co-operation fostered amongst participants. The external effects of

> voluntary organisations (or Civil Society 2 argument) refer to the utility of voluntary organisations as a way of linking citizens to the political system and as providing a bulwark against the state. (Newton 1999; Foley and Edwards 1996)

This twofold explanation, however, remains weak in two places. First, it is not clear how participation in one kind of association creates social capital that is appropriable to other contexts. This point remained also unsolved in *The Civic Culture*, which tried, unsuccessfully, to answer the essential question of 'whether there is a close relationship between the roles that a person plays in non-political situations and his role in politics' (Almond and Verba 1963:327). As with social capital theorists, the answer appeared to hinge on the extent to which 'Individuals can be expected to "generalise" from experiences outside political life to politics; if they have participated within non-political authority structures they will expect to do so in the political sphere also' (Almond and Verba 1963:327–8). However, it remains difficult, if not impossible, to prove that Putnam's choirs build trust not just among those who belong to choirs but amongst the general population. This is why some authors such as Whiteley and Seyd (1997) distinguish between social capital – the social trust fostered among citizens – and political capital, which refers to the trust engendered between citizens and leaders. What remains unclear is how levels of trust amongst ordinary people necessarily translate into levels of trust in politicians. This remains unclear precisely because of the absence of the political variable in explanations of social capital. As Pateman points out in her critique of *The Civic Culture*:

> Almond and Verba's argument that political competence is rooted in a process of 'generalisation' by individuals from their experiences of participation and non-participation in family, school and workplace, ... implies that individuals arrive at their political beliefs in disregard of the political system. Their beliefs are based purely on their non-political experiences. (Pateman 1980:82)

Hall's view reinforces this point. He explains that despite high levels of social capital in Britain, there has been a decline in the levels of political trust and political engagement. This is, according to Hall, because

> associational life alone does not seem to maintain levels of political trust ... Levels of social and political trust seem to respond to a range of factors beyond patterns of sociability, which may include the performance of the government of the day. (Hall 1999:454)

In his later work Putnam tries to address this problem of how the social capital created within a single group is generalisable to the wider society by distinguishing between 'bridging' and 'bonding' social capital. This, however, is little more than a restatement of the pluralist proviso that it is the density of association life, in other words, 'the pluralist and cross-cutting cleavages of an active citizenry ... ensure that outcomes will be democratic in overall effect' (Levi 1996:49). Putnam argues that: 'Dense but segregated horizontal networks sustain co-operation within each group, but networks of civic engagement that cut across social cleavages nourish wider co-operation' (Putnam 1993:175). However, the pluralist idea of overlapping membership does not in the case of Putnam's theory mean that the demands that citizens make on government are democratic or representative of anything other than a narrow spectrum of the electorate, as the classical criticisms of US interest group politics point out.

The second problem in the causal chain is how membership of various kinds of social clubs leads to mobilisation for political action. Again, part of the problem is the absence of politics. Coleman gives the example of clandestine study circles of South Korean radical students as a form of social capital that can then be used in their revolutionary activities. In other words, 'the groups constitute a resource that aids in moving from individual protest to organised revolt' (Coleman 1988:101). What is missing from this explanation, however, is why in some cases this may indeed be the case, but not in others. In short, what is missing is Tarrow's concept of the 'political opportunity structure' that translates 'the potential for movement into mobilization' (Tarrow 1996:18). Without this particular variable, we are unable to explain why some actors make use of their social capital resources, whilst others do not. What is also missing is a three-dimensional view of power. As Levi writes:

> even assuming that citizens overcome the free-rider problem and that they are mobilised for political action, their capacity to make effective demands and sanction government action may remain limited. Agenda setting, non-decision making and media manipu-

lation mean that certain issues do not even reach the public's attention. (Levi 1996:49)

Social capital, pluralism and the rolling back of the state

Social capital theorists do not see the above missing variables – politics, the state, class – as problematic; in fact, they do not even see that they are missing. Like their pluralist predecessors, the citizen of social capital theory, who can if necessary use social capital acquired through study circles or birdwatching societies for political mobilisation, is like the 'potentially active citizen' of *The Civic Culture*, where elites 'act responsively, not because citizens are actively making demands, but in order to keep them from becoming active' (Almond and Verba 1963:487). This, however, ignores the fact that some citizens will be better placed than others to mobilise for political action. In the case of Britain, Hall reminds us that whilst overall levels of social capital have remained relatively stable in the United Kingdom in contrast to the decline that Putnam laments in the United States, 'the decline in social trust has been greater among the working class than the middle class', and that 'the decline in trade union membership, encouraged by the governments of the 1980s, may have taken an especially hard toll on the associational life of the working class' (Hall 1999:432, 456).

The fact that the social capital literature shares many of the criticisms directed against the old pluralist paradigm should not really surprise us, given that it is, as was the pluralist paradigm before it, a further restatement of classical liberal theory that, as Pateman points out, 'developed as, and continues to be, the political theory of the Anglo-American system' (Pateman 1980:59). As such, social capital theory restates the liberal suspicion of the state, separates the effect of social and economic inequalities from political behaviour and employs a narrow conception of the political. The lack of specific causal mechanisms, as mentioned above, is intimately linked to these problems. The absence of politics, the state and social class from their paradigm means that social capital theorists fail to acknowledge as problematic some of the fundamental criticisms directed against them.

In particular, the lack of attention paid to politics and the state means that social capital theorists ignore the possibility that social capital may be an outcome, as well as a cause, of certain political structures and patterns of behaviour. Most of the literature on social

capital ignores the basic point that governments can and do affect levels of social capital, and focusses instead on how the existence of social capital, or its absence, affects governments and the success of their policies. The same criticisms were made by Barry (1970) and Pateman (1980) about *The Civic Culture*, which likewise ignores the possible reverse causal relationship, namely, that political structure may affect political culture instead of, or in addition to, the claim that political culture influences the political structure.

The consequences of ignoring this possible reversal in the chain of causation are considerable. If the absence of social capital is a result, rather than a cause, of a certain kind of politics and state capacity, then 'policy-makers who attack the lack of social capital would be attacking the symptoms and not the causes of the problem' (Tarrow 1996:396). In other words, as Tarrow suspects, 'whilst the indicators of malaise may be civic, the causes are structural' (Tarrow 1996:396).

Herein, however, lies an explanation for the popularity of social capital for the policy-making community in general and for institutions such as the World Bank in particular. The lack of attention paid by social capital theorists to politics, the state, social class is not somehow accidental; rather, the dominant neo-liberal paradigm of which social capital is an integral part, simply does not perceive this absence. Social capital is part of an earlier trend that represents a 'retreat from the state', largely as a result of the breakdown of Soviet communism on the one hand and, on the other, the rejection and loss of faith in 'big government' in the west. In short, social capital is part of the much wider 'good governance' project, backed by the IMF and the World Bank, which legitimises a reduction in the power of the state and a corresponding increase in the responsibilities of the private sector, whether that is the market itself or the non-profit voluntary sector (see Chapters 1, 2 and 8, this volume). This, in turn, ties in with the popularity of the 'Third Way' and the rolling back of the state that this too implies (see Chapter 8, this volume). Indeed, New Labour has drawn extensively on Putnam's concept of social capital, particularly in the area of social exclusion and the corresponding aim of creating a more inclusive and cohesive society (King and Wickham-Jones 1999:200–9).

Social capital and the World Bank

Social capital is an attractive concept precisely because it allows the World Bank to help to alleviate the symptoms of poverty in developing countries without doing anything to change the

underlying structural causes. In the twelve projects of the World Bank's Social Capital Initiative there is an amazing disregard for the structural causes of underdevelopment, rather than the society-centred causes that the World Bank focusses upon. The synopsis of Project 10, for example, states that:

> The overall objective of this study is to help improve the design and implementation of community-based water and sanitation services in Indonesia, based on the following hypothesis: a critical determinant of the performance of co-produced water and sanitation services is the level of social capital existing in the affected communities. (World Bank 1998:20)

This statement, which focusses on the society-centred causes that determine the performance of co-produced water and sanitation services, lets international institutions and national governments off the hook by pushing the responsibility for such services on to the poorest sectors of society rather than addressing the real structural problems of the global capitalist system, namely, the exploitation of the countries of the periphery such as Indonesia in order to sustain capitalist accumulation and the relatively high living standards in the core countries. This is not to deny the importance of such projects for improving the daily lives of ordinary people nor to deny the empowerment that individuals may gain from participating in such projects. However, it is to emphasise the effect that this has: namely, that the symptoms of the disease may be eased but the causes go unchallenged. As such, social capital theory represents a narrowing of the radical agenda: it permits a focus on micro-level initiatives to alleviate the worst instances of poverty whilst keeping off the agenda any large-scale reforms. In this sense, social capital echoes nineteenth-century ideas of self-help in much the same way that the empowerment policies that Cooke criticises in her chapter do (see Chapter 9, this volume). But as Cooke argues, whilst these may sound progressive, in reality they represent a displacement of the social burden from the welfare state onto ordinary citizens.

The synopsis of Project 3 is similarly ingenuous. This project focusses on how to improve the lives of people in the Indian state of Orissa affected by resettlement as a result of the expansion of open-mining extractive activities. The project aims to:

> contribute to increase social capital levels in the area, by building up local organizational capacity, bringing people to work together, and facilitating interface between the different stakeholders such as the workers, their communities, local government, NGOs, and the mine owner, Coal India Limited, a relationship currently characterised by a high degree of distrust and lack of cooperation. (World Bank 1998:13)

Again, however, the underlying assumption here is that this high degree of distrust and lack of co-operation between the workers and Coal India Limited is as a result of a lack of social capital and that by developing social capital such a relationship can be improved. Maybe it can, but again this ignores the very basic lesson that Marx taught us that the relationship between classes is necessarily antagonistic, as evidenced by the alleged physical mistreatment of trade unionists by Coal India Limited. A lack of social capital, or as the World Bank puts it, the 'high degree of distrust and lack of cooperation' is again a symptom of the malaise, not its cause. The cause lies in the structural imperatives of capitalism. In short, the theory of social capital ignores the fact that it is embedded in a socio-economic system that systematically grants a privileged position to certain interests at the expense of others.

This, *pace* social capital theorists, is precisely why the state remains of key importance. Without any kind of state at all, it is unlikely that any social capital can be generated in the first place and much more likely that a Hobbesian situation of 'war of every man against every man' would result. Secondly, without a particular kind of state, namely a redistributive state, it is unlikely that social capital would be shared equally by the whole of society. In short, when it comes to real politics where decisions over tax and spending have to be made, it is only governments that have the ability to decide these quintessentially political disputes.

In particular, it seems likely that the disadvantaged in society are much more dependent on state action to guarantee their ability to form social capital than the advantaged. Hall draws our attention to the adverse effects of state action on the social capital of the working class in Britain. He writes: 'The British case reminds us to be attentive not only to aggregate levels of social capital but to its distribution, that some may be organised "in" and others "out" by the same set of developments' (Hall 1999:458). In other words, the onslaught against the trade unions in the 1980s and the restructuring of

industrial production during that time had a negative effect on the associational forms of the working class whilst leaving intact, even enhancing in some cases, the associational forms of the middle class. Whilst the 'retreat of the state' may act as a catalyst for associational activity for the middle class who already have the resources necessary to associate, the working class, who may lack such resources, are left not empowered by the retreat of the state, but disempowered by the onslaught against trade unions and bereft of state help to withstand the vagaries of the market.

Conclusions: social capital and the retreat from radicalism

This brings me to my final point of enquiry, namely why social capital has come to replace earlier concepts such as civil society in the hearts and minds of the policy community. It is my contention here that a kind of funnelling effect has accompanied the movement from civil society to social capital, with the result that the concept used has become less political and its transformationary and radical (left-wing) potential has accordingly been reduced.

In the first place, it is difficult to see what social capital adds that civil society has not already covered. Nor does it seem particularly clear to other authors, many of whom frequently appear to use social capital as a synonym, or at the very least a closely related conceptual cousin, for civil society. Deth states: 'For its understanding, in close connection to social capital, the broader concept of civil society is used' (Deth 2000:123). Social capital as Putnam himself points out is 'to some extent merely new language for a very old debate in American intellectual circles. Community has warred incessantly with individualism for pre-eminence in our political hagiology' (Putnam 2000:24). This raises the question of why we need to use social capital at all if the broader concept of civil society suffices. Indeed, whether we take Hanifan's early definition of social capital or the more up-to-date definition used by the World Bank, it is hard to see what they add that is not already encompassed in Marx's observation that 'man is not an abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the human world, the state, society' (Marx 1970:131).

> The individual is helpless socially if left to himself ... If he comes into contact with his neighbour, and they with other neighbours, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social

> potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. (Hanifan 1916:130)

> [Social capital] includes the shared values and rules for social conduct expressed in personal relationships, trust, and a common sense of 'civic' responsibility, that makes society more than a collection of individuals. Without a degree of common identification with forms of governance, cultural norms, and social rules, it is difficult to imagine a functioning society. (World Bank 1998:1)

Perhaps the reason why social capital seems to be 'much ado about nothing' can be found in the liberal view of the individual. Incapable of seeing the individual as anything but an atomised, self-seeking, autonomous entity, liberal thought must self-consciously create a 'glue' in the form of social capital capable of linking these disparate individuals together. By contrast, a view of human nature that sees individuals as only existing in interaction with and in relation to others regards social capital as axiomatic. In short, the more society is really a society, the more the existence of social capital will simply be taken for granted. The more society is an accidental collection of individuals, the more we will write about social capital, or to be more precise, the more we will lament the lack of it.

If social capital does not appear to add anything as a conceptual tool that other concepts such as civil society do not, then the reason for its appearance must lie elsewhere. This brings me back to the neo-liberal ideological discourse of which it is an integral part. Whilst civil society too had its place in the neo-liberal agenda, it also had a much longer normative history than social capital, a fact which explained both its widespread appeal to many different actors as well as the difficulties inherent in its usage. In particular, although civil society had a long liberal heritage that could be called upon, it also had a clearly radical heritage, particularly as used in the work of Marx and Gramsci. Civil society, whilst broader and more vague than social capital, retained a critical edge as a result of the normative contradictions inherent within it. Even whilst the radical right were appropriating civil society as their own, those on the left were busily pointing to its radical heritage in the work of Gramsci and Marx. Social capital, however, clearly belongs to the neo-liberal agenda of the new right and cannot call upon an alternative, radical history as civil society could. This is not to argue, despite claims to the contrary, that social capital is a normative-free, more scientific

concept, which can be easily broken down into quantifiable and measurable parts. Social capital is just as normative; this time, however, the norms appear firmly fixed on one side of the political spectrum rather than tantalisingly, and confusingly, straddling both sides as civil society was wont to do.

Guide to further reading

Coleman (1998), the edited volume by J. W. van Deth *et al.* (1999) and Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000) provide a useful way into the concept. Tarrow (1996), Skocpol (1996), Levi (1996) and Hall (1999) provide more critical approaches. The World Bank web site <www.worldbank.org> provides a great deal of information about social capital as well as links to other relevant sites.

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Conclusions

Georgina Blakeley and Valerie Bryson

Problems with liberal theory

It should now be clear that many of the concepts discussed in this volume represent a revival of the liberal ideas which received their fullest expression in the nineteenth century. As such, it might seem strange to label them as right wing, for liberalism is central to a progressive tradition in western thought that has challenged repression and the denial of individual freedoms. However, whilst liberalism can still be progressive in its opposition to authoritarian regimes and in its defence of individual freedoms and rights, its potential is restricted in three key, linked ways.

The first key problem arises from liberalism's view of the individual and human nature. Liberal epistemology postulates a specific kind of autonomous individual, abstracted from his (generally not her) social context, endowed with natural rights and attributes which must be protected from fellow humans rather than shared with them. This poses two separate problems: first, this narrowly individualistic focus ignores more collective needs, experiences and solutions. This means, for example, that it tends to see problems of racism or sex discrimination as a product of individual malice or culture rather than of power relations, and it points to individualistic or cultural solutions which leave the wider socio-economic context untouched. Second, by seeing 'human nature' as abstract, as something independent of specific social and political institutions, liberal epistemology makes it hard to conceive of actual existing politics in any other way and, as such, it can make the goal of a radically reordered society appear meaningless. In other

words, by foreclosing alternative visions of the individual and human behaviour, liberal epistemology basically argues that this is 'as good as it gets'.

This static tendency inherent within liberal thought has been reinforced by its current hegemonic position which rules out of order other ways of seeing the world. Thus, although the ideas represented by most of the concepts in this volume are not new, the context in which they are being used is. As discussed earlier, this context is one shaped by the perceived collapse of any left-wing alternative following the East European revolutions in 1989 and its attendant wave of free market triumphalism. Such triumphalism, based on the assumption that capitalism had finally achieved victory over socialism, reached its apogee in Fukuyama's work on the 'end of history' (1992); in less flamboyant form it lends vigour and currency to the concepts discussed in this book, and helps to account for their popularity.

The second key problem posed by liberal epistemology arises from its assumption of the autonomy of the political sphere and, in particular, the distinction between the public and private realms. This assumes that the formal equality of the political realm can be insulated from the socio-economic inequalities of the wider society. However, both Marxists and feminists have questioned this autonomy, arguing that the two spheres overlap and are interconnected. This means that the liberal insistence on the public/private distinction can represent a deliberate strategy to conceal certain power relations, particularly patriarchal and economic ones, and insulate them from democratic control.

This links to the third problem: by treating capitalism, particularly free market global capitalism, as natural and given, liberalism both fails to see the power structures which this generates and accepts as necessary and inevitable policies which serve the interests of economic elites rather than the majority of workers. This means that liberalism fails to see the economic context in which rights and freedoms are exercised and the extent to which they may be restricted in practice by lack of resources.

Taken together, these problems mean that uncritical use of liberal theory can obscure much more than it reveals and that approaches based upon it are at best partial and at worst serve exploitative economic interests on a global scale.

Class, capitalism and prospects for change

Such criticisms are of course not new, but have been part of the language of socialism and the left for nearly 200 years. However, this language has been largely silenced, or at least only whispered, in recent years, partly because the discourse of socialism has itself been used to legitimise the most appalling violations of liberty and abuses of power in some former so-called communist countries. As the truth about the repressive aspects of these regimes emerged, many, particularly on the left, rushed to distance themselves from accusations of Marxist reductionism and to embrace key liberal tenets. As such, many began to see the free market as a necessary corollary of democratic freedoms and to associate any form of state intervention with a denial of basic freedoms. This perspective has not been confined to political or economic elites, but has been endorsed by many writers and academics on the left and by many ordinary citizens. Whilst learning the lessons from past mistakes, however, the search for alternative concepts prompted by the perceived failure of the socialist alternative in both east and west, should not be at the expense of a lack of general interest in questions relating to the political economy of capitalism. Unfortunately, in recent years the radical baby has all too often been thrown out with the Stalinist bathwater.

Whilst the collapse of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe signalled for many the bankruptcy of Marxism as an ideology, what Wood has defined as the 'retreat from class' began much earlier (Wood 1986). A general lack of interest in questions relating to the political economy of capitalism and the rejection of class as a key tool of analysis was already evident in the 1950s and 1960s with the increased emphasis on post-war affluence and its effects. Today, many in the west would agree with those politicians who claim that we live in a classless society, or that 'We're all middle class now.'

Nevertheless, a clear theme emerging from the chapters in this volume is that class is still relevant today. This argument depends upon a Marxist analysis of class which is quite distinct from its more popular use. From a Marxist perspective, 'class' is not simply a description of people who share a similar lifestyle or speak with a similar accent. Rather, it is an economic category and a motive force in human history, which is seen as the product of conflicting class interests between owners and workers. Class relations are essentially conflictual, as owners seek to maximise profits and in the long run

they can do so only by keeping wage levels as low as possible. Whilst at times of economic growth, workers in some countries can improve their living standards and negotiating position, these gains are vulnerable at times of recession and threatened by competition from cheaper workers overseas as the imperatives of the capitalist system spill beyond national boundaries.

This is not to argue for a crude economic reductionism or a fatalistic resignation to market forces. On the contrary, this volume was inspired by the belief that ideas can make a difference, and its working assumption is that academic and theoretical analysis can help us understand the world with a view to making it a better place. The concepts it discusses are not just part of a sterile debate within the walls of academia; those on the frontline of resistance in Seattle or Genoa also use concepts like civil society, empowerment and globalisation. They do so, however, in a radical and critical way, for concepts are not static but can be contested and fought over. As the twentieth-century Italian intellectual and founder of the Italian Communist Party, Gramsci, argued, concepts can play an important role in formulating a strategy for radical or even revolutionary change, complementing economic struggle by challenging and exposing the complex and often concealed ways in which dominant class hegemony is maintained (see Adamson 1987/88).

To the extent that the concepts discussed in this volume remain within a liberal paradigm, they are unable to conceptualise and challenge this hegemony or to understand the ways in which the social organisation of production constrains attempts at reform. The result is that, despite the good intentions of many of their proponents, many of the concepts can be used to focus on the symptoms rather than the causes of social problems and to hinder rather than contribute to effective strategies for change. At the same time, however, many of the concepts also have a more radical heritage and are therefore potentially much more useful. Taken together, the arguments of the contributors to this volume suggest that we should explore this potential as part of a more general reclamation of the half-forgotten language and heritage of the left, particularly that inspired by Marx.

Whilst there have clearly been many changes since Marx's time, the discussions in the preceding chapters imply that, in an era where what Wood labels the 'totalising logic and coercive power of capitalism' is ever more obvious, Marx's critique of capitalism remains as pertinent today as ever (Wood 1995:245). Moreover, this

critique does not simply enable us to see obstacles to reform, it also enables us to identify sources of more radical resistance and to imagine the possibility of a society based on a very different kind of logic. It reminds us that capitalism does not simply exploit workers, it is also dependent upon them and therefore always inherently vulnerable to collective action. This means that we are not helpless in the face of global economic trends, for these raise the possibility of global movements of resistance. It also suggests that, contrary to the endism of Fukuyama,

> The lesson we may be obliged to draw from our current economic and political condition is that a humane, 'social', truly democratic and equitable capitalism is more unrealistically utopian than socialism. (Wood 1995:293)

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