

Sociology 924 Agenda issues from Interrogations #2, Week 3. 9/18/2002

I. DEFINITIONS

- a) *meaning of power in IEMP model.* Are the types just analytical distinctions? Is there a general concept of “power”? (Shamus Khan)
- b) *Entwining.* What does it mean to talk about sources of power being “entwined”? (Amy Lang)
- c) *authoritative and diffuse power.* Is there any reason why the former is more explanatory? (Matt Vidal)
- d) *political power vs state power.* Is there a difference? (Sarah Swider)

II. METATHEORETICAL ISSUES

1. Society as a as a loose, messy, aggregation of power networks vs as a “system”

Mann rejects the view that societies are “social systems” preferring to see them as “loose aggregates of diverse, overlapping intersecting power networks.” But in places his analysis seem to invoke arguments that make society very much like a “system”? Is he confusing his critique of “primacy” with his claims about “systems”? (Matt Vidal) What, in any case, might it mean to say that a particular “crystallization” is “fundamental” or “dominant? (Pablo Mitnick, Cesar Rodriguez, Sarah Swider) Is there any general kind of explanation Mann offers for the shift of dominance in a crystallization or in the relative importance of one form of power? (Sarah Swider) In some ways, Mann seems to in fact offer a kind of statist theory in which he becomes a statist determinist – is this right? (Sun Jing)

2. The “Capitalist State”: Class Reductionism, class primacy.

Mann argues against any real “primacy” to class/economic factors in explaining the trajectory of states in the 19th century and argues that while the state was crystallized as “capitalist”, there is no primacy to this crystallization. Is there some important aspect of the Marxist theory of the state as a capitalist state that Mann misses? (Amy Lang) Did any of the non-class “crystallizations” ever challenge the capitalist character of the state? (James Benson) Perhaps the fact that all of the states had a capitalist crystallization in this period could be considered evidence of class primacy? (Pablo Mitnick, Cesar Rodriguez)

2. Levels of Abstraction

Is Mann approach simply at a lower level of abstraction than Marxist theories of the state? (Amy Lang) Does he actually elaborate a *theory* of the state – and what does it mean to have such a theory? (Cesar Rodriguez) How should we understand Mann’s preoccupation with “messiness” (Brad Brewster)

3. Ends and means of power

Mann argues that the *means* of power are more fundamental in explaining trajectories of change than the *ends*. Is this persuasive? Could one argue that economic power imposes ends on other forms of power? (Matt Nichter)

4. State autonomy and state cohesion

What precisely does Mann mean by state “autonomy”? What are its bases? How does it differ from Skocpol’s state autonomy? (Landy Sanchez, Brad Brewster) Is autonomy a consequence of the “messiness” thesis? (Brad Brewster) Mann argues that states will have more internal cohesion when they are deeply embedded in civil society classes, and will have less cohesion when they have lots of autonomy. Does this seem like a sound argument? (Landy Sanchez)

III. SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STATE

5. The national-territorialization of capitalism

One of the most interesting points in Mann’s argument is that capitalism qua capitalism has an inherent tendency to organize its power networks transnationally, but in the course of the 19th century it becomes increasingly national in its organization and character, even as it spread globally. He attributes this to the autonomous effects of political and military organization of power. But are there also inherent capitalist reasons for having territorialized national capitalist states?

6. military and political power

Mann insists that the military and political are distinct sources of power. What precisely does this mean? Does this make sense in Feudalism? In the modern state? (Matt Dimnick, Keedon Kwon)

7. Power Networks & Power Organizations

Mann uses both a network and organizational language for talking about power. What precisely does this mean when he talks about military power and its subordination to the state in the 19th century? (Amy Lang) Are the consolidated-authoritative power organizations (the state and military) likely to become less important relative to more diffuse network power under conditions of globalization? (Christine Overdest)

8. unitary vs fragmented character of the state

Mann insists that the states he studies are not unitary actors, but fragmented in various ways. Does Mann's way of discussing this create openings for popular forces to penetrate/use the state? (Teresa Melgar)