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The State and Political Theory

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theory, is for Gramsci the principal moment in explaining both capitalist domination *and* its overthrow. This consciousness comes from within the masses in the form of a mass party.⁴ *Consciousness itself* becomes the source of power for the proletariat in laying siege to the State and the means of production, just as lack of proletarian consciousness is the principal reason that the bourgeoisie remains in its dominant position.

⁴ This party would not only have mass character but its leadership would be united to the movement and the base by a democratic centralism (Buci-Glucksmann 1979, 232).

CHAPTER FOUR

Structuralism and the State: Althusser and Poulantzas

THE STRUCTURAL version of Marxism that arose in France in the mid-1960s sought to harmonize Marxist thought with the seemingly organized and "automatic" nature of advanced capitalist society, a society where the working class and bourgeoisie both carry out "prescribed" roles. For thinkers like Saussure and Jacobson, who researched the underlying structure of language, Lévi-Strauss, who applied structuralism to primitive rituals, Lacan, who did the same in psychology, and Foucault in social relations and knowledge, the crucial element in understanding human society is "not the conscious activities of the human subject, but the unconscious structure which these activities presupposed" (McLellan 1979, 298). Louis Althusser brought this structuralist perspective to Marx's writings as part of a critique of Lefebvre's and Sartre's Marxist humanism (Althusser 1969; Althusser and Balibar 1970). Like Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, and other structuralists, Althusser wanted to combat the subjectivism that placed "man" the subject at the center of metaphysical systems. Sartre's emphasis on the individual and individual action is confronted by Althusser's views of conditioned acts and the individual subjugated by ideological apparatuses.

The debate over structuralism as epistemology (and as a philosophy of science and knowledge) has been long and involved; to do it justice in a few pages is difficult and not really necessary for our discussions of the structuralist view of the State.¹ This view hinges on two key points in Althusser's work, and we will concentrate on these.

First, as a structuralist, Althusser claims that the social structure has no creative subject at its core. Rather, the social formation is a system of objective processes without subjects. Thus, Althusser rejects the notion of man as the subject or agent of history, arguing instead that individuals are the "supports" or "bearers" of the structural relations in which they are situated. It is the *relations of production* (social classes) that are the subject

¹ For summaries of Althusser's philosophical contributions, see Burris (1979), McLellan (1979), and Hirsch (1981). The most detailed attack on Althusser is by E. P. Thompson (1978), and the most detailed defense of Althusser (in response to Thompson) is by Perry Anderson (1980).

of history, not individual actors as free agents. Only classes, rather than individuals, have a history as they develop and come into conflict in a specific mode of production. Second, although Althusser's structural determinism has led his critics to brand him as neo-Stalinist (e.g. Thompson 1978), Althusser's theories, very much unlike Stalinism, reject economic determinism and argue instead for the *relative autonomy* of politics and ideology from the economic base. He proposes that Marx's concept of the mode of production involved three distinctly articulated structures or levels (the economic, the political, and the ideological) that "were intimately and internally combined to form the matrix of the mode of production" (Hirsh 1981, 173). Although the economic structure is always "determinate in the last instance," any one of the three structures can be the "structure in dominance" in a particular mode of production (capitalism or feudalism, for example). Therefore, in a given social formation, the economic, political, or the ideological could be the dominant structure, but the economic structure would always determine which of the three would be dominant (Althusser and Balibar 1970, 216-218).

Nicos Poulantzas used these structuralist elements to develop a theory of the State (Poulantzas [1968] 1974) and Althusser himself also applied his ideas on economic, political, and ideological structures to the State (Althusser 1971). Before going on to Poulantzas's work, which is the major structuralist effort regarding the State (and which—as we shall show—he gradually changed by integrating the insights of structuralism into the broader framework of a class struggle perspective), an analysis of Althusser's major essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1971) will both exemplify the elements of his position, and show specific connections between Althusser's work and Gramsci's views of base and superstructure.

ALTHUSSER: IDEOLOGY AND THE STATE

For Althusser (and for Marx) the issue of ideology is crucial to the *reproduction of the relations of production*, because if the reproduction of the relations of production is to be assured, "individual-subjects" occupying the posts that the sociotechnical division of labor assigns to them in production, exploitation, repression, ideologization, scientific practice, etc., must be "inserted into practices" governed by rituals of ideology (Althusser 1971, 169-170). "Their concrete material behavior is simply the inscription of life of the admirable words of the prayer: 'Amen—so be it'" (1971, 181).

What is a theory of such an ideology? Althusser argues that *ideology has no history*. Ideology exists as a construct that transcends any history

of social formations; it does not depend on a particular social formation but rather exists independent of any moment in time.

The peculiarity of ideology is that it is endowed with a structure and a functioning such as to make it a non-historical reality, i.e., an *omni-historical* reality, in the sense in which that structure and functioning are immutable, present in the same form throughout what we call history, in the sense in which the *Communist Manifesto* defines history as the history of class struggles, i.e., the history of class societies. (1971, 151-152)

Althusser uses the plain term "ideology" to designate ideology in general, a theoretical construct that is not rooted in any particular empirical context. However, he notes that a theory of *particular* ideologies, whatever their form (religious, ethical, legal, or political), *does* depend in the last resort ("in the last instance") on the history of social formations, and thus on the modes of production combined in social formations, and on the class struggles that develop in them. This theoretical construct of ideology in general defines ideology as representing "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (1971, 153). He then goes on to argue that ideology has a material existence: an ideology always exists in an apparatus and its practices. This existence is material; this imaginary relation to real relations (ideology) is itself endowed with a material existence, and material existence is the practice of ideology within particular apparatuses of society. Thus, Althusser expresses the structuralist notion that knowledge of the internal functioning of a structure has to *precede* the study of its genesis and evolution. The internal functioning is studied by defining the *existence* of ideology in terms of the way it is inscribed in the "actions of practices governed by rituals defined in the last instance by an ideological apparatus" (1971, 170). An individual's beliefs are his "material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject" (1971, 169). It is this notion that precedes the study of particular ideological apparatuses which are tied to the development of particular social formations.

The notion goes further: individuals and their ideas are no longer the source of the dynamic of this dialectic. As we have noted, Althusser sees human individuals as the "supports" or "bearers" of the structural relations in which they are situated. In the case of ideology, Althusser's subject "acts insofar as he is acted upon by a system in which ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief" (1971,

159). He contends that ideology recognizes individuals as subjects, subjects them to the "subject" of the ideology itself (for example, God, capital, the State), guarantees that everything really is so, and that on the condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right. Therefore, the vast majority of "good" individuals internalize the ideology and are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ideological apparatuses. The individual is therefore "free," author of and responsible for his actions, but is at the same time subjected to an ideology that acts as a higher authority. The individual is stripped of all freedom except that of accepting his submission. "The individual is interpolated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e., in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjugation. . . . There are no subjects except by and for their subjugation" (1971, 169).

With this theory of ideology, Althusser constructs a mechanism by which individuals willingly subject themselves to an ideology (Gramsci's hegemonic "consensus"), and it is this subjugation that defines them in the society itself. Inherent in the ideology is the necessary ignorance of the reality that the ideology represents, and this reality is, in the last resort, the reproduction of the relations of production and of the relations deriving from them (1971, 170).

This position could not be more anti-existentialist. Rather than an individual who defines himself or herself through individual acts and the assumption of responsibility for those acts, Althusser's subject is *defined* by subjugation to the ruling ideology, by placing himself willingly into the context of the ideological apparatuses and having his freedom defined by those apparatuses. Sartre's existential freedom is, according to Althusser, a totally *conditional* freedom, conditioned by a ruling structure of relations and thought. This structure is internalized by the *good* subjects, with its real meaning hidden to them. Individual definition through conditioned acts means, of course, that existential freedom does not define history, but is limited by it in a structured way.

Althusser goes one step further: he argues that the ideological apparatuses are not the realization of ideology *in general*, nor even the conflict-free realization of the ideology of the ruling class. "The ideology of the ruling class does not become the ruling ideology by the grace of God, nor even by virtue of the seizure of state power alone. It is by the installation of the ideological state apparatuses in which this ideology is realized itself that it becomes the ruling ideology" (1971, 185).

The installation of the ideological State apparatuses, in turn, is the stake in the class struggle. It is the victory of the ruling class in the ideological State apparatuses that permits their ideology to be installed in the appa-

paratuses. Once this ideology is installed, we have seen that Althusser has it take on the attributes of an ideology *in general*, and in that sense the individual in his actions is no longer the point of reference for understanding the functioning of society, but rather the individual is a subject, defined in terms of the ideological apparatuses and their practices.

Now that we have discussed the construct of ideology *in general* in Althusser's analysis, and seen that this focus on ideology and superstructure argues that the reproduction of the relations of production takes place through ideology that, in the capitalist mode of production, is *in the last instance* carried out in the context of class struggle, we can turn to Althusser's analysis of the ideological State apparatuses in that model.

Althusser makes four main points in his essay. First, every social formation (such as capitalism) must reproduce the conditions of its production at the same time that it produces, in order to be able to produce. That is, for feudalism or capitalism or socialism to function as such, it must reproduce the productive forces—the land, labor, capital, and knowledge that enter into production *and* the existing relations of production that are inherent in that production system—the hierarchy of power and control among landowners and serfs (feudalism), capitalists and labor (capitalism), or directors or party officials and workers (socialism). "As Marx said, every child knows that a social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of production at the same time as it produced would not last a year" (Althusser 1971, 127).

These productive forces, Althusser suggests, are not reproduced at the level of firm but at the level of *class*. For example, in capitalism, the capitalist class, as a class, reproduces labor power by paying workers wages with which they can feed themselves and raise the next generation of workers. The level of wages paid is determined by class struggle over the length of the working day and the hourly wage. But workers have to be reproduced as more than just homogeneous workers. They have to be "diversely skilled and therefore reproduced as such" (1971, 131). This diversity is defined by the sociotechnical division of labor—its different jobs and positions.

The second point of Althusser's essay concerns how the reproduction of the division of labor and skills is carried out under capitalism. Here Althusser discusses an issue left obscure by Marx and Engels, who treated labor as "homogeneous" (undifferentiated) except in terms of Engels's conception of an "aristocracy" of the working class, paid off by capitalists as a means to divide workers against themselves. Althusser argues that unlike social formations characterized by slavery or serfdom, this reproduction of the skills of labor power tends "decreasingly to be provided for 'on the spot' (apprenticeship within production itself), but is achieved

more and more outside production: by the capitalist education system, and by other instances and institutions” (1971, 132).

Reproduction here is not the same issue that Gramsci and also Althusser, below, raise about the function of education (schooling) in reproducing the *relations* of production (the norms, values, and conception of society). Rather, in this instance, Althusser brings education into the reproduction of the division of labor—the development of particular production skills for particular people. As we shall discuss in more detail below, this “know-how” is divided into different categories for students according to their different future roles as workers; furthermore, the schools also teach different children different rules of behavior depending on the type of job that they are likely to hold. Thus, “the reproduction of labor power reveals as its *sine qua non* not only the reproduction of its ‘skills’ but also the reproduction of its subjection to the ruling ideology or of the ‘practice’ of that ideology, with the provision that it is not enough to say ‘not only but also’ for it is clear that *it is in the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labor power*” (1971 133).

Now, what about the reproduction of the *relations* in production? How is this reproduction secured? As the third point of his essay, Althusser answers: “I can say: for the most part, it is secured by the legal-political and ideological superstructure.” Furthermore, he argues that again “for the most part, it is secured by the exercise of State power in the State Apparatuses, on the one hand the (Repressive) State Apparatus, on the other the Ideological State Apparatus” (1971, 148). He says “for the most part” because the existing relations of production are first reproduced by the reward and punishment system of production itself—by the materiality of the processes of production. But repression and ideology are, of course, present in production.

Althusser’s conception of reproducing the relations of production is almost identical to that of Gramsci’s hegemony, except that for Althusser the State has a much more important role in reproduction than for Gramsci (“for the most part” versus the “first line of trenches”). For Althusser, the State attains an overwhelmingly important position relative to the effects on reproduction of the production system itself and its related “private” institutions, both in the reproduction of labor power (not discussed by Gramsci) and in reproducing the *relations* of production. And the most important single institution in the State used to carry out these two types of reproduction is the school:

This reproduction of the skills of labor power . . . is achieved more and more outside production: by the capitalist educational system. (1971, 132)

I believe that the ideological State apparatus which has been installed in the *dominant* position in mature capitalist formations as a result of a violent political and ideological class struggle against the old dominant ideological State apparatus, is the educational ideological apparatus. (1971, 152)

Like Gramsci, Althusser roots superstructure in structure. The superstructure is determined “in the last instance” by the base: “The upper floors (the superstructure) could not ‘stay up’ (in the air) alone, if they did not rest precisely on their base” (1971, 135). He goes on to say that the determination of the superstructure by the base “in the last instance” is thought of by the Marxist tradition in two ways: (1) there is relative autonomy of the superstructure with respect to the base and (2) there is reciprocal action of the superstructure on the base—changes in the superstructure affect the base, as well as the more traditional concept that changes in the base affect the superstructure.

The State, then, is rooted in the base. It is, in the fourth point of Althusser’s essay, also the “machine” of repression, which “enables the ruling classes to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion” (1971, 137). He therefore returns initially to the original Marxist conception of the State as the “essential point”: “The State apparatus, which defines the State as a force of repressive execution and intervention ‘in the interests of the ruling classes’ in the class struggle conducted by the bourgeoisie and its allies against the proletariat, is quite certainly the State, and quite certainly defines its basic ‘function’ ” (ibid.). Althusser also argues that Marx’s conception of the separation of State power and the State apparatus is correct; the State apparatus can survive intact even with a change in State power (i.e., a change in the class that holds State power). The objective of class struggle concerns State power and the use of the State apparatus for class objectives; thus, in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, the proletariat must seize State power in order to destroy the bourgeois State apparatus, replace it with a proletarian State apparatus, and then destroy the State—the famous withering away of the State (the end of State power and of every State apparatus).

To this traditional conception, Althusser adds Gramsci’s contribution of the ideological State apparatuses (ISAs). The repressive State apparatus contains the government, the administration, the army, the police, the courts, the prisons, etc., all of which “function by violence,” at least ultimately. The ISAs are defined as the religious ISA (the system of churches), the educational ISA, the family ISA, which is also responsible for the reproduction of labor power, the legal ISA, which also belongs to the repressive State apparatus, the political ISA (the political system including

the different parties), the trade union ISA, the communications ISA (press, radio, television), and the cultural ISA (1971, 143).

The differences between the ISAs and the repressive apparatus hinge on the singularity of the repressive apparatus versus the plurality of the ISAs—the repressive apparatus is entirely public, it is “unified” (although Althusser does not deal with the possibility of conflicts and contradictions within the repressive apparatus), while much of the ISA is private—churches, political parties, trade unions, families, private schools, newspapers, etc. What, Althusser asks, do the private ideological apparatuses have to do with the State? He relies on Gramsci for the answer: “The distinction between the public and the private is a distinction internal to bourgeois law, and valid in the (subordinate) domains in which bourgeois law exercises its ‘authority’ . . . [T]he State, which is the State of the ruling class, is neither public nor private; to the contrary, it is the precondition for any distinction between public and private” (Althusser 1971, 144). It is unimportant then whether the ISAs are public or private; it is their *function* that matters; it is what they do and for whom they do it. In a sense this is the same point brought out by Galbraith (1973): the planning sector is undifferentiated as to State or private, except as defined by law.

Furthermore, although both the repressive State apparatus and ISAs contain repressive and ideological elements, the former functions “massively and predominantly” by repression while functioning secondarily by ideology. Even the army and police use ideology to “ensure their own cohesion and reproduction” (Althusser 1971, 145). The ISAs, on the other hand, function primarily by ideology and secondarily by repression: even the churches and schools use repressive punishment systems, disciplining “not only their shepherds, but their flocks” (ibid.).

In developing the nature of the ISAs, Althusser falls back on Gramsci: the diversity of the ISAs is unified beneath the ruling ideology, and “no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses” (1971, 146). Control of these ISAs, however, is not only necessary for the class trying to hold power, but is necessary in the face of the ISAs as a site of class struggle. As Gramsci pointed out, the superstructure—the hegemonic apparatus—controlled by the ruling class, also gives rise to a counterhegemony. In Althusser’s terms,

The class (or class alliance) in power cannot lay down the law in the ISAs as easily as it can in the (repressive) State apparatus, not only because the former ruling classes are able to retain strong positions there for a long time, but also because the resistance of the exploited classes is able to find means and occasions to express itself there, either by the

utilization of their contradictions, or by conquering combat positions in them in struggle. (1971, 147)

Control of the State apparatus, therefore, is useful for the class in power insofar as it permits that class to use the repressive apparatus to enforce the law (a body of law that exists or is altered to fit the needs of the class in power), and insofar as it is able to exercise its hegemony through the ISAs. Althusser agrees totally with Gramsci that the State apparatus without hegemony means a State without long-term power, even if those who control the State apparatus also control the repressive apparatus. In this sense, he (like Gramsci) shifts attention to the possibility of contesting State power (and therefore the power of the ruling class) not through the contesting of the repressive State apparatus (war of maneuver or frontal strategy) with a counterforce based on *violence*, but through the development of a counter-ideology, an ideology that becomes so pervasive among the subordinate classes that it destroys the ideological hegemony of the ruling groups, thereby (according to this analysis) making it impossible for these groups to rule in the long term. This means—in Gramscian terms—*surrounding* the State.

NICOS POULANTZAS: THE ORGANIC RELATION BETWEEN STATE AND BASE

Althusser’s structuralist reading of Marx was first applied to an investigation of the State by Nicos Poulantzas. Unlike Althusser, Poulantzas makes his central focus social classes and politics rather than Marxist theory as a whole. Yet, if we accept the Gramscian proposition that superstructure has a prominent place in understanding social structure and change, Poulantzas’s studies of the State encompass most of the crucial elements in a theory of society.

Poulantzas’s principal contribution to the debate on the capitalist State is his analysis of the State in relation to class struggle. His work focuses on the nature of social classes, the role of the State in shaping and defining class conflict, and the effect of this conflict on the State itself. Out of this analysis, we find a State that is inserted in and defined by class relations (the “structures” of capitalist society), at the same time that it is a factor of cohesion and regulation of the social system in which it functions.

However, Poulantzas’s theories changed significantly between the publication in France of *Political Power and Social Classes* in 1968 (translation published 1974), and *State, Power, Socialism* in 1978 (translation published 1980). The early work was definitely structuralist. In it, the State reproduces the class structure because it is an articulation of economic

class relations in the political “region.” The State’s form and function is therefore shaped by the structure of class relations. In this early work, Poulantzas also argues that although there is no all-encompassing theory like the Hegelian ideal, transcendental State. The State is *specific to the mode of production*—for example, the capitalist State, the feudal State, and so forth. Moreover, in *Political Power and Social Classes*, he uses Althusser’s concept of the “relative autonomy” of politics and economics to argue that the capitalist State is at once a class State and must also be relatively autonomous from the class struggle in production to function effectively as a class State. But the relatively autonomous State serves as the site of the hegemonic group’s organization of the fractionated *capitalist class*. Labor’s struggle only shapes the State insofar as it is part of class relations in production.

In his later work, Poulantzas abandons the structuralist State for a State shaped by class struggle itself. As early as 1973, Poulantzas argued that there is a different relation between social classes and the State, depending on the *stage* of capitalist development. So changes in capitalist relations of production shape political institutions; the “structure” of the capitalist State is not a “structure” at all, but rather apparatuses shaped by class struggle and by corresponding changes in capitalist production. In *State, Power, Socialism* ([1978] 1980), the “relative autonomy” of the State is made dialectic: there is the possibility of class struggle within the State apparatuses because of the very contradictions inherent in “autonomy.” It is these contradictions and the role of social movements in shaping the State that become important in the latest works.

Thus, Poulantzas’s State becomes much more than the site of the dominant group’s organization of dominant-class power. The State is more than the unifier of capitalist-class fractions and individualizer/isolator of the working class. It is, in this last work, a site of class conflict where political power is contested: the State, for Poulantzas in 1978, is shaped by struggles in production and *within the State*. Yet he retains his notion of the class State and its origins. We will therefore begin with this earlier version of the State theory and then show how it changed to its present form.

EARLY POULANTZAS

Poulantzas argues in *Political Power and Social Classes* ([1968] 1974) that the capitalist State is *part* of class relations in production. Specifically, in capitalist production, the separation of the direct producer from his means of production does not lead to his individualization and isolation *per se*, but rather to a *socialization* of productive forces (labor) and to a

concentration of capital. The political separation (isolation) of workers from each other (preventing class cohesion) is *not* the result of capitalist production itself, but of the juridical-political superstructure of the capitalist State.

It is in production that the *structure* of the labor process is determined. It is the separation of the direct producers from the means of production that determines the “setting-up of agents as juridico-political subjects, *in that it impresses a determinate structure on the labor process*” (1974, 129). This determines their class relation. The State here is an *activist*: within this determined structure, the State individualizes and personalizes workers, preventing class struggle.

For Poulantzas, then, the process of capitalist production—in the civil society—defines the formation of classes. But it is the State that redefines workers and capitalists politically into individual subjects as we observe them in capitalist society. The “absence” of cohesive classes, particularly a cohesive working class, is therefore a result not of the separation of labor from its tools and product, but of a juridical political apparatus that individualizes workers.

He contends that in the last instance, the juridical and ideological structures are determined *by the labor process*. They change the nature of the class struggle by intervening to conceal from the newly created individual-subjects (agents of production) that their relations are class relations (1974, 130).

This effect of isolation is *terrifyingly real*: it has a name: *competition* between the wage earning workers and between the capitalist owners of private property. It is in fact only an ideological conception of the capitalist relations of production which conceives them as commercial encounters between individuals/agents of production on the market. But competition is far from designating the *structure of capitalist relations of production*: it consists precisely in the effect of the juridical and the ideological on *socio-economic relations* . . . [this relation] conceals from the agents of production their class relations in the economic struggle. (1974, 130-131)

This point is crucial to Poulantzas’s early and later analysis: it is the State that isolates workers and capitalists into “individuals,”² not the class-structured capitalistic production (which inherently moves both capitalist and workers to class identification). Competition is developed among mem-

² Of course, competition among capitalists in production already isolates and individualizes them. But the capitalist State’s juridical apparatus ostensibly prevents official collusion among them. Claus Offe argues that the State does quite the opposite: it organizes the class project for inherently competitive (in production) individual capitalists (see Chapter 5 below).

bers of the same class by the juridical-political apparatuses of the State, while those same apparatuses diffuse the inherent conflict *between* production-based classes by “concealing the class relation.” The capitalist State appears as the political *unity* of an economic struggle. The State presents itself as representing the “general interest” of competing groups—it is the national-popular class State.

If the State tends to diffuse class conflict between inherently hostile economic classes (workers and capitalists) by isolating people as individuals and then reunifying them as the popular nation-State, how, according to Poulantzas, does the capitalist class come to dominate the State? Since Poulantzas claims that the State promotes competition among individuals through its juridical-political apparatus, how do the competing capitalists come to use the State for their own purposes against the equally individualized working class? For it is precisely this (in early Poulantzas) that the capitalist class comes to do. Poulantzas calls this the *political class struggle* (1974, 136). He argues that the political struggle is *relatively autonomous* from the economic struggle—it has to be, in order to conceal class relations in the economic struggle from the agents of production. Yet it tends to constitute *class unity* for the capitalist class out of the isolation of the economic struggle, a class unity that serves the reproduction of economic class relations. In other words, the State allows for the unity of the individualized capitalists, and their dominant (economic) class is able “by means of a whole political-ideological operation of its own,” (1974, 137) to constitute its strictly political interests as representative of the people-nation, an ideological construct intended to encompass members of different social classes as individuals stripped of their class identity.

This is the principal problematic for Poulantzas’s early work: once economic struggle is mediated in the particular way outlined by the State, the relatively autonomous political struggle itself is dominated by the dominant class(es). In order to explain how this happens, Poulantzas relies on Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, and on Althusser’s ideological apparatuses. Hegemony indicates, for Poulantzas, (a) how the political interests of the dominant class become constituted as representative of the “general interest” of the body politic, and (b) how the fractions of the dominant class can compose themselves into a “power bloc,” which reunifies competitive capitals into a dominant class and “controls” the State. For this State, according to early Poulantzas, “presents this peculiar feature, that nowhere in its actual institutions does strictly political domination take the form of a political relation between the dominant class fractions and the dominated classes. In its institutions everything takes place as if the class ‘struggle’ did not exist” (1974, 188).

Gramsci, Poulantzas argues, introduces a theoretical break between he-

gemony and domination (see Chapter 3 above). A class can and must become the leading class ideologically before it can become a politically dominant class. It wins hegemony before it conquers political power. Hegemony is a world view that is imposed on a social formation and gains ideological domination *before* the conquest of political power. In that sense power is separated from hegemony, and the political organization of a class is apparently related to the elaboration of a world view that it imposes on the ensemble of society—all this in contrast with the position that a class cannot gain ideological domination before conquering political power.

But Poulantzas contends that Gramsci’s formulation (as interpreted by Poulantzas) is not correct. It is here that Poulantzas is at his most Althusserian: a given ideology cannot be separated from the unity of the structure in which it is manifested, and this structure has the domination of a given class as its effect in the field of class struggle. In other words, ideology cannot be separated from the dominance of a given class.

The dominant ideology, by assuring the practical insertion of agents in the social structure, aims at the maintenance (the cohesion) of the structure, and this means *above all* class domination and exploitation. It is precisely in this way that within a social formation ideology is dominated by the ensemble of representations, values, notions, beliefs, etc. by means of which class domination is perpetuated: in other words it is dominated by what can be called the ideology of the dominant class. (Poulantzas 1974, 209)

Ideology, then, is part of the class struggle, the relation within which class domination functions. That is why the dominated classes necessarily experience their relation to the conditions of existence within the overall framework of the dominant ideology, and the dominant ideology does not necessarily represent only values and norms of the dominant class. Further, the dominant ideology is not necessarily isomorphic with the ideology of the dominant class. But the fact that a certain class is dominant in the class struggle makes the dominant ideology serve that class in the political region (the State), and therefore enables the class to use the dominant ideology as a manifestation of its class power.

One of the particular characteristics of the dominant bourgeois ideology is, according to Poulantzas, the fact that it conceals class exploitation in a specific manner, “to the extent that all trace of class domination is systematically absent from its language” (1974, 214). This specific masking of class domination, combined with the particular role of cohesion that the bourgeois ideology plays under the dominance of the juridical-political system that is part of that ideology, is reflected in the close relation between ideology and the capitalist State. The particular power of this interrelation

is that individuals do not seem to be able in one and the same theoretical movement to be unified *and* to attain their social existence, except by means of gaining political existence in the State. Thus, through hegemony, the hegemonic-class leadership is able to present itself as incarnating the general interest of the people-nation and at the same time to condition the dominated classes to a specific political acceptance of their domination. Ideology, by hiding the class relationship and subsequent exploitation implicit in the ideology of individualization and reunification of the nation-State, therefore enables the dominant class to reproduce social relations in such a way that it remains dominant. In other words, ideology *legitimizes* the existence and functioning of a class State.

Yet, what about competition between members and subgroups of the dominant classes? How is this competition resolved to produce the translation of dominant ideology into dominant-class power? Poulantzas argues that the relationship between the capitalist State and the dominant classes or fractions pushes them "toward *their political unity under the protection of a hegemonic class or fraction*. The hegemonic class or fraction *polarizes* the specific contradictory interests of the various classes or fraction of the power blocs by making its own economic interests into political interests and by representing the general common interests of the classes or fractions of the power bloc. This general interest consists of economic exploitation and political domination" (1974, 239).

What is interesting in Poulantzas's formulation is that the hegemonic class or fraction may be in charge of the State, but a class or fraction may be in charge of the State without thereby being hegemonic. Even more, the ruling class or fraction may not only not be hegemonic but even on occasion may not be part of the power bloc. He cites the example of certain social democratic governments in France where the *petite bourgeoisie* was neither hegemonic nor a part of the power bloc, but was the ruling class—that is, it controlled the State. "In this case the characteristic dislocation between this class and its party representation is generally found: its party plays the role of 'clerk' with a hegemonic class or fraction or even for another class or fraction in the power bloc. The same holds true for the class in charge of the state" (1974, 251).

Within the context of the dominant ideology, then, the power bloc is the political expression of the different fractions of the dominant class. It is through the power bloc that these different fractions are unified to rule; nevertheless, its function is to translate the dominant ideology into concrete action. It is through the power bloc that ideology is transformed into a series of material practices, customs, and morals, which act as cement in the ensemble of social, political, and economic relations. The dominant ideology is thus incorporated into the State apparatuses, which elaborate,

inculcate, and reproduce this ideology. This role is crucial for the reproduction of the social division of labor, social classes, and the domination of society by a particular class.

In his early work Poulantzas sees the State as being autonomous from the civil society because of the necessity of isolating workers from the class consciousness developed in the civil society. The State is autonomous in the sense that although characterized by hegemonic-class leadership, the State does not directly represent the dominant classes' economic interests, but rather their political interests: the State is the dominant classes' political power center as the organizing agent of their political struggle. The State functions to organize dominant classes and reduce competition among them, while it increases competition among the dominated classes, isolating each member of the dominated classes into his or her individual space, but maintaining its legitimacy in the eyes of the dominated classes by claiming to be a unifying force and representing mass interests.

In this formulation, the State is not a place of class struggle, but rather a *product* and a *shaper* of class struggle in the civil society. The dominated classes have very little influence over the structure and operation of the State. This equilibrium of political power really does not indicate any sort of *equivalence* of power among the forces present. (This meaning of equilibrium must not be confused with Marx and Engels's conception of autonomy, in the situation where no class has enough power to control the State.) The equilibrium at issue in early Poulantzas is related to the dislocation of relations of power in the framework of the capitalist State and the relations of forces in the field of economic struggles within the limits set by political power. The State is autonomous vis-à-vis the economy: it is possible to have a social policy that profits certain dominated classes but also makes it possible to cut into the dominant classes' economic power without ever threatening their political power. So, although it is true that the political and economic struggles of the dominated classes impose a guarantee to protect the economic interests of certain members of those classes, this is not in any way a constraint on the political power of the dominant classes:

The notion of the general interest of the 'people,' an ideological notion covering an institutional operation of the capitalist State, expresses a *real fact*: namely that this State by its very structure, gives to the economic interests of certain dominated classes guarantees which may even be contrary to the short term economic interests of the dominant classes, but which are compatible with their political interests and their hegemonic domination.

This brings us to a very simple conclusion but one which cannot be

too often repeated. This guarantee given by the capitalist State to the economic interests of certain dominated classes cannot be seen *per se* as restraint on the *political power* of the dominant classes. It is true that the political and *economic struggles of the dominated classes* impose this on the capitalist State. However, this simply shows that the State is not a class instrument, but rather the state of its society divided into classes. The class struggle and capitalist formations entails that this guarantee of the economic interests of certain dominated classes is inscribed *as a possibility* within the very limits imposed by the State on the struggle for hegemonic class leadership. But in making this guarantee, the State aims precisely at the political disorganization of the dominated classes; in the formation where the strictly political struggle of the dominated classes is possible it is the sometimes indispensable means of maintaining the dominant classes in hegemony. In other words, according to the concrete conjuncture a line of demarcation can always be drawn within which the guarantee given by the capitalist State to the dominated class' economic interests not only fails to threaten the political relation of class domination but even constitutes an element of this relation. (Poulantzas 1974, 190-191)

THE MILIBAND-POULANTZAS DEBATE

There have been a number of critiques of Poulantzas' early work, both as a structuralist (see the discussion of the German "derivationists" in Chapter 5) and as a functionalist (Clarke, 1977). The best known discussion, however, at least to English-speaking readers, took place in the pages of the *New Left Review* in 1969-1970 (with a later contribution by Poulantzas in 1976), in the form of an exchange between Ralph Miliband and Poulantzas. Ostensibly, the discussion centered on Miliband's book *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969). In that work Miliband both attacks pluralist models of the State and presents his version of a Marxist interpretation of the State's role in reproducing capitalist-class society. This is not the place to go into Miliband's views in detail; they will be discussed more adequately when we deal with American Marxist analysts of the State in Chapter 8. But it is important to note that while the Miliband-Poulantzas discussion has been characterized as a debate between "instrumentalism" and "structuralism" (Gold, Lo, and Wright 1975), it is a mistake to view Miliband as an instrumentalist—as developing a theory of the State that has the State acting as a *direct* instrument of the ruling class. The debate between Poulantzas and Miliband can be more accurately described in terms of the issues of: (1) method, and (2) the individual as a source of change versus the individual as determined by structure.

On the first issue, Poulantzas criticizes Miliband's work by arguing that Miliband chooses to reply directly to bourgeois ideologies by the "immediate examination of concrete fact. . . . Not that I am against the study of the 'concrete'; on the contrary, having myself relatively neglected this aspect of the question in my own work (with a somewhat different aim and object), I am only the more conscious of the necessity for concrete analyses. I simply mean that a precondition of any scientific approach to the 'concrete' is to make explicit the epistemological principles of its own treatment of it" (Poulantzas 1969, 69).

It is here that Poulantzas states the overall structuralist (Althusserian) position most clearly: he contends that in contesting the notion of plural elites fundamental to bourgeois theory, Miliband should have rejected the very notion of elite. He should have moved "outside" the individual-oriented, empiricist epistemology of bourgeois political science. "For concepts and notions are never innocent, and by employing the notions of the adversary to reply to him, one legitimizes them and permits their persistence. Every notion or concept only has meaning within a whole theoretical problematic that finds it: extract it from this problematic and imported 'uncritically' into Marxism, they have absolutely uncontrollable effects" (Poulantzas 1969, 70).

Poulantzas claims that this methodological error is manifested in Miliband's difficulty in comprehending social classes and the State as *objective structures*, and "their relations as an *objective system of regular connections*, a structure and a system whose agents, 'men,' are in the words of Marx, 'bearers' of it . . . Miliband constantly gives the impression that for him social classes or 'groups' are in some way reducible to *interpersonal relations*" (ibid.).

Poulantzas therefore correctly argues that epistemology, method, and results cannot be separated. How does Miliband respond to this? He launches an essential critique of structuralism. He grants that *The State in Capitalist Society* may be insufficiently theoretical in the sense that Poulantzas demands, but he also thinks that Poulantzas's approach (i.e., structuralism) is "so profoundly concerned with the elaboration of an appropriate 'problematic' and with the avoidance of any contamination with opposed 'problematics,' as to lose sight of the absolute necessity of empirical inquiry, and of the empirical demonstration of the falsity of these opposed and apologetic 'problematics'" (Miliband 1970, 55). Miliband insists that a study of the concrete, which Poulantzas so carefully avoids, is a necessity for any demystification of bourgeois theory.

On the second issue of the debate—Poulantzas's view that Miliband puts undue emphasis on the direct participation of members of the capitalist

class in the State apparatus and government as a means of showing that the State is tied to bourgeois interests and is an expression of them—Poulantzas argues that the relation between the bourgeois class and the State is an *objective relation*. “This means that if the function of the State in a determinant social formation and the *interests* of the dominant class in this formation *coincide*, it is by reason of the system itself: the direct participation of members of the ruling class in the State apparatus is not the *cause* but the *effect* and moreover a chance and contingent one of this objective coincidence” (Poulantzas 1969, 73).

Miliband counters by arguing that Poulantzas’s *exclusive* stress on objective relations suggests that “what the State does is in every particular and at all times *wholly* determined by these ‘objective relations’: in other words that the structural constraints of the system are so absolutely compelling as to turn those who run the State into the merest functionaries and executors of policies imposed upon them by the ‘system’ ” (1970, 57).

For Miliband, all this seems to do is to substitute the notion of objective structures and objective relations for the notion of ruling class, and that Poulantzas’s analysis seems to lead straight toward “a kind of structural determinism, or rather a structural super-determinism, which makes impossible a truly realistic consideration of the dialectic relations between the State and the system” (1970, 57). The relationship between the ruling class and the system, according to Miliband, is much more complex than this determination by the “objective relations” allows. If the objective relations entirely determine the functioning of the State bureaucracy, then, according to Miliband, it follows that there is really no difference between a State ruled by bourgeois constitutionalists or one ruled by fascists.

The significance of the “debate” is that it poses very clearly Poulantzas’s position at the time and the most important objections to it. The “instrumentalism” versus “structuralism” aspect of the debate with which it has been labeled, is, in fact, a misreading of the main points being made. Rather, Poulantzas’s structuralism is posed as a scientific method against Miliband’s empiricism, and the State, as conditioned by the structures of the relation of production and the class struggle inherent in those relations of production, is posed against Miliband’s view that the ruling economic class finds its political expression directly in the apparatus of the State. Both writers criticize each other’s brand of determinism. Both are probably correct; neither *The State in Capitalist Society* nor *Political Power and Social Classes* presents us with a dialectical analysis of the relationship between the State and civil society, even though both works *hint* at such a dialectical relationship. Poulantzas, for example, sees in the unifying function of the State a principal contradiction:

Its principal contradiction is not so much that it ‘calls’ itself the State of all the people, although it is in fact a class State, but that, strictly speaking, it presents itself in its very institutions as a single ‘class’ State (i.e., the State of the dominant classes which it helps to organize politically), of a society which is institutionally fixed as one not-divided-into-classes; in that it presents itself as a State of the bourgeois class, implying that all ‘people’ are part of this class. (1974, 189)

Miliband, when all has been said about the limits and contingent character of civic and political liberties under bourgeois democracy in his analysis, argues that many liberties have indeed been an important part of the landscape of advanced capitalist societies, particularly in the way that they affect the relationship between the dominated classes, the State, and the dominant classes. The point is that some bourgeois freedoms implicitly represent an expression of “power” of dominated classes in bourgeois society, and it is these freedoms that “need to be extended by the radical transformation of the context, economic, social and political, which condemns them to inadequacy and erosion” (Miliband 1973, 239).

It is significant that although neither Miliband nor Poulantzas carried this analysis any further in their earlier work, both had made significant changes in their positions by the late 1970s, Miliband in *Marxism and Politics* (1977), and Poulantzas in *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (1975) and *State, Power, and Socialism* ([1978] 1980). In this later work, Poulantzas modifies his earlier construction of the State as being totally autonomous in a civil society because of the necessity of isolating workers from the class-conscious development of civil society. He comes to argue that the State’s autonomy is not only couched in the class struggle in the civil society—it not only tries to represent the interests of the dominant classes by mediating the contradictions of that struggle in the civil society, transforming it for individualizing the workers, and legitimating itself through its ideology of unification—but ultimately, in playing that role, *incorporates into its heart the class struggle itself*. Autonomy gives rise to class struggle in the State and the possibility of the dominated classes *taking over* the apparatuses of the State for their own purposes and interfering with the functions of the State reproducing the dominance of the dominant groups. It is here that Poulantzas, much more than in earlier works, relies increasingly on Marx’s and Engels’s “abnormal” situation, in which the State is analyzed in an instance where no class has enough power to dominate the State. To this, Poulantzas adds the possibility that unlike in the Bonapartist State, the class struggle could ultimately put the State into a position where it acts to modify the relations of production in the civil society.

LATER POULANTZAS: DIALECTICAL STRUCTURALISM

We now turn to a detailed summary of Poulantzas's reformulation of his own work on the capitalist State in the context of class struggle. In this reformulation, he carries forward his concept of the State as both the product and the shaper of objective class relations.

The State and Social Classes

First, he argues that the role of the State apparatuses is "to maintain the unity and cohesion of a social formation by concentrating and sanctioning class domination, and in this way reproducing social relations, i.e. class relations" (1975, 24-25). Political and ideological relations are materialized and embodied, as material practices, in these apparatuses. Furthermore, social classes are *defined* by their relationship to the economic apparatuses—the place of production *and* the State apparatuses. So social classes and the class struggle are part of the economic and political relations in a society: "the apparatuses are never anything other than the materialization and condensation of class relations" (1975, 25). He separates this concept from the institutionalist-functionalist analysis, which has class relations arising from the situation of agents in institutional relationships. Weber, for example, had class relations emerging from relations of power in hierarchical institutions. But Poulantzas contends that State apparatuses do not have "power" of their own—institutions have no "power" as such, nor is power inherent in hierarchical relations. Rather, the State "materializes and concentrates class relations, relations which are precisely what is embraced by the concept 'power.' The State is not an 'entity' with an intrinsic instrumental essence, but is itself a relation, more precisely the condensation of a class relation" (1975, 26). It is therefore not hierarchy that creates classes, but social classes that produce the particular configuration of power in the State apparatus. At the same time, the State apparatus is inherently marked by the class struggle—class struggle and the State apparatus cannot be separated.

The second formulation defines the relationship of the State to the *dominant* class. Since the State apparatuses are the "materialization and condensation of class relations," they attempt, in some form, to represent the interests of the dominant class. Poulantzas describes this representation as two stages of capitalism: one is the competitive stage, and the other, the more recent monopoly capitalism. In both stages, the State is "separated" from the economic structure, giving it the appearance of having relative autonomy from the dominant class. This separation is carried out, according to Poulantzas, as part of the relative separation of the political from the

economic that is specific to capitalism. It derives from the "separation and dispossession of the direct producers from their means of production that characterizes capitalism" (1975, 98). He argues that historically, capitalist ideology has promoted the concept of democracy in the political sphere as a sufficient condition for a mass democratic society. One person-one vote has shifted attention away from the class struggles inherent in capitalist production; political "democracy" has *displaced* the struggle from the economic sphere to the voting booth. In the political arena—including the juridical apparatus—all members of society are equal. Rich and poor, old and young, (ultimately) women and men, all have the same power (one vote) to change or maintain the social situation. The inequality of economic relations is thus downgraded in capitalist society in favor of equality in political life. This diffuses conflict in economic matters, because it diverts such conflict into the political arena, into a contest over power in the State apparatus (1974). As in his earlier work, the State, under these ideological conditions, has to "appear" autonomous and neutral while at the same time keeping the dominated classes fractionalized and representing the interest of the dominant classes' power bloc. Relative autonomy is the necessary condition for the role of the capitalist State in class representation and in the political organization of hegemony. But now, more than in his earlier work, with the displacement of class struggle from the economic to the political arena, the State itself becomes subject to the struggle—it becomes, in Poulantzas's words, "the condensation of a balance of forces":

The correspondence between the state on one hand, which ensures the social formation's cohesion by keeping the struggles that develop within the limits of the mode of production and by reproducing the social relations, and the interests of the hegemonic class or fraction on the other hand, is not established by means of a simple identification or reduction of the state to this fraction. The state is not an instrumental entity existing for itself, it is not a thing, but the condensation of a balance of forces. The correspondence in question is established rather in terms of organization and representation: the hegemonic class or fraction, beyond its immediate economic interests which are of the moment or at least short-term, must undertake to define the overall political interest of the classes and fractions that constitute the power bloc, and thus its own long-term political interest. It must unite itself and the power bloc under its leadership. In Gramsci's profound intuition, it is the capitalist state with all its apparatuses, and not just the bourgeois political parties, that assumes an analogous role, with respect to the power bloc, to that of the working-class party with respect to the popular alliance, the 'people.' (1975, 98)

In monopoly capitalism, the State takes on economic functions that it did not have in the competitive stage. Poulantzas argues that the State has a general economic function even in the competitive stage, but this consists of reproducing the general conditions of the production of surplus value; taxation, factory legislation, customs duties, and the construction of economic infrastructure such as railways all constituted the liberal State's intervention in the economy within the context of the class struggle. In monopoly capitalism, however, the relation of separation between the economic and the political that we described above is modified: the difference between politics and ideology (the conditions of production) and the economic space (the relations of production) becomes much less clear. The State enters directly into the relations of production—into the valorization of capital (1975, 101). Thus, in the monopoly stage of capitalism, the functions of the State are extended directly into production as a result of the crises of capitalist production itself.

It is here that Poulantzas goes "beyond" Althusser and Gramsci on two grounds. First, he argues that we can distinguish certain apparatuses that are part of the State and can be designated "ideological apparatuses of the State," such as the schools and other ideological apparatuses that conserve a "private" juridical character (but are closely allied with the State), such as the Church (private), media (State and private), cultural institutions (State and private), etc. We can also think of a "separate" *repressive* apparatus of the State for analytical purposes. Yet, this conception of distinct ideological and repressive apparatuses can only be descriptive and indicative. It is true that the repressive apparatus has had a *certain manner* of expressing ideology—the exercise of *legitimate* physical violence—but the repressive apparatus has an ideology and is ideologically bound. According to the forms of the State and the phases of capitalist reproduction, certain apparatuses can move from one sphere to another, from the ideological apparatuses to the repressive and vice versa. Poulantzas cites the example of the army which, in certain forms of military dictatorship, becomes directly an ideological-organizational apparatus functioning principally as the political party of the bourgeoisie (1974, 1980). Similarly there is a constant ideological role played by the justice system, the penal system, and the police. Thus, the ideological and repressive functions and apparatuses of the capitalist State are often difficult to separate.

Second, and more important, however, Poulantzas claims that the conception of the ideological and repressive roles of the State as developed by Gramsci and systematized by Althusser rest on the presupposition that the State only acts, only functions, by repression and ideological inculcation. That is, the State only acts *negatively* as a preventer, excluder, controller, etc. This conception:

considers the economy as a self-reproducible, self-regulating instance, where the State only serves to pose *negative rules* of the economic "game." Political power is not present in the economy, it only frames it; it isn't engaged in its own positive way because it only exists to prevent (by its repression and ideology) disturbing interferences. (1978, 33; my translation)

To analyze the State solely with the categories of repression-prohibition and ideology-mystification necessarily leads one to *subjectivize* the reasons for consent (by the masses) . . . and to situate these reasons either in ideology (in the sense that the State fools and cheats the masses) or in the wish for repression and love of the Master. (1978, 35; my translation)

Poulantzas cannot agree that the State acts only negatively; to the contrary, he contends that the State is engaged at the heart of the capitalist reproduction process: "the State also acts in a positive fashion, *creating, transforming and making reality*" (1980, 30). The economic functions of the State simply cannot be captured in the ideological-repressive dichotomy—these are not preventive actions, but the development of positive alternatives to other possibilities, possibilities that could have serious negative implications for the reproduction of capitalist production.³

He concludes, then, that Gramsci's formulation of the State's political space in terms of the repressive and ideological apparatuses *did* enlarge the State's sphere of operations, *did* include a series of apparatuses—often private—in the dominant class's hegemonic apparatus, and *did* insist on the ideological action of the State, but it restricted this sphere to negative actions, leaving us with a very *restrictive* notion of the State, one in which the actions of the State are unidirectional and in which the State apparatus itself contains no conflict or contradictions.

Poulantzas extends Gramsci's concept of a State that is part of the (ideological) hegemony of the dominant class plus the repressive apparatus. Poulantzas's concept carries on both of these functions in the context of a class struggle (therefore the State is part of and the result of the class struggle)—and plays an economic role in reproducing the general conditions of the relations of production. And in the monopoly phase of capitalist development, the State enters directly into production itself *as part of its reproductive role*.

³ This analysis disagrees completely with Buci-Glucksmann's concept of Gramsci's State as an active *expander* of dominant-class power (see "Hegemony and the State" in Chapter 3 above).

The State and Class Struggle

In his last book ([1978] 1980) before his untimely death, Poulantzas expanded these two major formulations of the State as product and shaper of objective class relations into a detailed analysis of the capitalist State. He develops the concept of the "separation" of the political and economic spheres through the State into four parts: the division of manual and intellectual work, individualization, the law, and the nation. These he sees as the major elements in the State's functioning to displace the class struggle from the economic to the political arena. Before going on to explore these elements in detail, it is worth noting again that class structure and the class struggle for Poulantzas are the fundamental definers of relations in a society. Political power, even though founded on economic power, is primary in the sense that its transformation conditions all change in other areas of power (here he agrees with Gramsci), and political power is concentrated and materialized in the State, the central point of the exercise of political power (1978, 49). Thus, the apparatuses of the State are not simply appendices of power—the State is "organically present in the generation of class powers" (1980, 45). (It is here that he is in total *disagreement* with the concept of power as developed by Foucault—e.g., see Foucault 1978.) Note also that Poulantzas answers the question of why the bourgeoisie chose the representative, national-popular, modern State for the expression of its political power by arguing that this particular kind of State most successfully separates the worker from the struggle over the means of production and hence most successfully reproduces capitalist relations in production. Thus, the State is neither just "political" nor just juridical in the sense that it reproduces or enforces the legal bases of capitalist exchange. Rather, it is fundamental to the conditions under which the bourgeoisie can accumulate and control capital, displacing struggle and conflict to the political from the economic sphere. What are the details of this separation?

The division of knowledge and power. Capitalist production, Poulantzas points out, is marked by a social division of labor that separates intellectual work from manual work by a separation of technology from the process of work itself, by the use of science and technology to *rationalize* power, and by an organic relation between this separated intellectual work and political domination—a relation between knowledge and power. The State incorporates this division into all of its apparatuses. "It is within the capitalist State that the organic relationship between intellectual labour and political domination, knowledge and power, is realized in the most consummate manner" (1980, 56). This State is the corollary and the product of this division, also playing its own role in the division's constitution and reproduction.

These apparatuses . . . imply precisely the setting up and control of knowledge and discourse (whether directly invested in the dominant ideology or erected out of dominant ideological formations from which the popular masses are excluded). . . . It is the permanent monopolization of knowledge by this scientist-State, by its apparatuses and its agents, which also determines the organizational functions and the direction of the State, functions which are centralized in their specific separation from the masses. . . . It is equally evident that a series of institutions of representative democracy—that is indirect democracy—(political parties, parliament, etc.), in brief, institutions of the relations between the State and the masses, arise from the same mechanism. (1978, 61-62; my translation)

The State takes knowledge and participates in its transformation into language and rituals that serve to separate knowledge from mass consumption and from manual work—from the process of direct production. This legitimizes a particular ideology—the dominant bourgeois values and norms—by changing that juridical-political ideology into a set of technocratic "facts" and decisions based on "scientific" studies, on "expertise," etc. But, Poulantzas argues, the knowledge-power relation is not only an ideological legitimization: the capitalist separation of intellectual from manual work also concerns science itself. The State incorporates science into its mechanisms of power—intellectual "experts" as a body of specialists and professionals are controlled through their financial dependence. They have largely become functionaries, in one form or another, of the State. For example, in the United States, a very high percentage of *all* professionals (about 30 percent) are directly employed by federal, state, or local government (many in education), while another 20 percent depend indirectly on State expenditures for their livelihood (e.g., on defense or research contracts in private universities). Research is heavily influenced by such government contracts, and they also have an important effect on new technology.

The State not only has an important hold on the generation of new knowledge in the society, but also on how that knowledge is used. Poulantzas argues that the discussion in the State apparatus—the discussion that is separated from the masses by the relation of power and knowledge—is a discussion of action, of strategy. Knowledge used by the State is part of a strategy for political action within the dominant ideology. It is this discussion that is nourished by the knowledge available to the State through its "experts." The State helps define expertise by financing and employing intellectuals, then uses this expertise in a particular way to reinforce the

exclusion of the masses from decision-making while at the same time legitimizing its role as the center of power and decision-making.

Where Poulantzas differs from Gramsci on this point should now be clear. Although Gramsci analyzed the role of intellectuals in the organization of the dominant-class hegemony and recognized that the bourgeoisie was the first class in history that needed, in order to make itself the dominant class, a body of organic intellectuals—intellectuals who helped maintain and extend dominant-class hegemony (for example, the role of Enlightenment philosophers was fundamental to the bourgeois revolutions), Poulantzas puts these intellectuals at the heart of the modern capitalist State itself.⁴ It is the State that is crucial to new formations of the division of knowledge and its uses, as well as legitimizing the separation of intellectual work from manual work. It is also in the State where an important part of the strategies for maintenance and expansion of dominant-class hegemony—based on “expertise”—are developed. Furthermore, Poulantzas sees such uses of knowledge—expertise carried out in the State—as part of a class struggle, so State-influenced expertise has to develop strategies of compromise, of how to maintain dominant-class hegemony in the face of subordinate-class demands. How many of these “strategies” and uses of knowledge respond directly to subordinate-class demands depends on the power relations in the society. Poulantzas’s point is that one cannot talk about technology or knowledge without talking about power. The process of developing counterhegemony is part of the process of class struggle, including the struggle within the State apparatuses.

Individualization. Through its juridical (legal) system and political ideology, Poulantzas theorized in 1968, the capitalist State isolates both workers and capitalist managers from their antagonistic class-conflict position in production (1974). It considers and treats each member of society as an individual, whether worker or capitalist. This treatment tends to separate both workers and capitalists from their respective production-based social classes. Each individual, whether worker or capitalist or manager, competes in production with other members of his or her class. The State then reunifies these isolated (in the economic sphere) individuals within the political sphere under the aegis of the nation-State. The State claims to represent the collective will of workers and capitalists. Thus, neither the production-based class interests of capitalists nor of workers is supposed to be represented in the workings of the political system. But, in fact, says Poulantzas, the State is not neutral. It functions to keep workers from

⁴ The situation portrayed here reaches its most extreme levels in the French State, with its intellectual bureaucracy. Nevertheless, to one degree or other, all modern capitalist States incorporate intellectuals, who seem to have an unmitigated desire to be near power.

organizing *politically* as a class (keeps them isolated from their class interests) while it simultaneously helps to bring capitalists and their managers back from their isolated position (an isolation that the State has helped to create) in order to reassert their dominant position through the State.

The “individualization” of class members—their separation from their class by the capitalist State—is a fundamental tenet of Poulantzas’s exploration of why the bourgeoisie has chosen the modern, “democratic” State as the expression of its class power. But the earlier version had functionalist overtones, which Poulantzas corrected in his last book ([1978] 1980). In this last version, the individualization of the worker has its roots in the separation of the worker from the means of production in the capitalist mode. This separation—this isolation—that is the basis of the extraction of surplus value by owners of capital and their managers and creates a work force in which individual workers become appendices of machines, also is the basis of the institutional materialism of the capitalist State. In the State apparatus, the division of labor is also based on the atomization of functions. Yet, the State is not only a reflection of the division of labor in the rest of capitalist society; it is a crucial factor in the *organization* of the social division of labor by *reproducing* the social “fractionalization-individualization” inherent in that division. This is part of the ideological apparatus of the State: “This ideology of individualization not only serves to mask and obscure class relations (the capitalist State never presents itself as a class State), but also plays an active part in the divisions and isolation (individualization) of the popular masses” (Poulantzas 1980, 66).

For Poulantzas, then, the individualization and privatization of the society is the result of the exercise of State power, which divides people from their production-based social classes, isolates them, and then reunites them under the aegis of the nation-State—recollectivizes them, as it were, in the image of the State itself. The State refashions individuals, redefines them, homogenizes them, and places them in a new division of labor consistent with the social space as defined by the nation-State. Nevertheless,

if the private individual is not a limitation on, but a channel of the power of the modern State, this does not mean that this power has no real limits; rather, the limits are not defined by the private individual. They arise in popular struggles and in the power relations between the classes, because the State is also the material and specific condensation of a given relationship of forces, which is itself a class relationship. This private individual appears equally as the *result* of this relation of forces, and of its condensation in the State. If private individuals do not have

an intrinsic essence that places, as such, absolute external barriers to the power of the State, they do limit this power through being one of the privileged modern representations of the class relationship *within* the State. We are familiar with this limit: it is called representative democracy, which as much as it is truncated by the dominant classes and by the materialism of the State, is nonetheless inscribed at the heart of this materialism, of popular struggle and resistance. If it is not the only limit to State power, it is nonetheless decisive. (Poulantzas 1978, 80; my translation)

The individual is transformed by the State and ceases to be a threat to State power in his previous form, the form in which he controlled the means of production and was rooted in a private collectivity—the village, the land, or the family production unit. The new individual is homogenized in terms of his new functions in the capitalist production system, separated from his tools and appended to others' capital. He is normalized and fitted into the new hierarchies, the division of labor associated with modern capitalism. It is in this form that the State re-creates the individual and stresses individuality—individual rights, equality before the law, individual consumption, individual expression, individual political power (voting)—within the context of the nation-State. It is the State that assumes the expression of collective will, using the “expert knowledge” produced by the division of intellectual from manual skill in the form of intellectuals who are themselves homogenized into the new “normalized” individual. But in this context, as well, the State gives power to the individual through representative democracy, and it is in this form that the normalized individuals can, as part of *political* class struggle, make gains of power within the State itself. By holding up the individual as the source of power, the modern capitalist State *allows representative democracy to be an arena of struggle*.

The law. Poulantzas has two basic formulations concerning the role of law in the capitalist State and the reproductive function of that law. In the first, he discusses the relationship between the law and repression; his principal point is that there is no dichotomy between law and repression in the capitalist State, but rather that law and repression are intimately entwined. In the second, he argues that the law constitutes the formal cohesive framework for individuals separated from their means of production; the law defines the political space into which these individuals are reintegrated and the *way* they are reintegrated. Thus, it is the law that defines the normalization process discussed above, which includes, for example, a system of examinations in school, rules of property (relations

between capitalist and worker), and the rules of conflict (e.g., the rights and obligations of labor unions).

The first formulation is crucial to Poulantzas's argument, discussed earlier, that the repressive and ideological apparatuses should not be analytically separated (as they are in Gramsci's work on the one hand and by Foucault, on the other). It is also crucial to understanding why the dominated masses “consent” to the rule of the bourgeois State. Gramsci argues that the dominant-class hegemony is internalized by the masses, who thus consent to dominant-class rule. Although Marx saw this as “false consciousness” that could be broken down by a vanguard, conscious, working-class party, Gramsci understood that the State was actively involved in the *expansion* of dominant-class hegemony by entering directly into the ideological formations and reinforcement of this hegemony, which included bourgeois law. Furthermore, although Marx viewed bourgeois law and the juridical-political system as part of the repressive apparatus of the State, Gramsci tended to view it much more as part of the ideological apparatus. If the dominant-class hegemony came into crisis, Gramsci argued, it was then that the repressive forces were brought into play by the bourgeoisie.

Poulantzas rejects Gramsci's argument that the increase of the ideological apparatuses and their techniques for maintaining and extending dominant-class power implies a reduction of physical repression, that the two forms of using power are substitutes for each other rather than complements.

For Poulantzas, the capitalist State neither separates law from violence nor substitutes mechanisms of manipulation-persuasion (ideology) for repression. To the contrary, the capitalist State develops a monopoly on legitimate physical violence; the capitalist State's accumulation of the means of corporal control goes hand in hand with its character as the State of law and order. This monopoly “underlies the techniques of power and the mechanisms of consent; it is inscribed in the web of disciplinary and ideological devices; and even when not directly exercised, it shapes the materiality of the social body upon which domination is brought to bear” (1980, 81). Thus, he goes on, disciplinary institutions and the emergence of ideological institutions like the parliament and the school *assume* the monopoly of violence by the State, and this violence, in turn, is obscured by the displacement of legitimacy toward “legality” and the law. Not only that, but the major instrument of legal violence—the army—serves as the model for the organization of schools and bureaucratic hierarchies both within the State and in the private corporations.

We turn now to Poulantzas's second formulation of the role of law, which *defines* the individual in the capitalist nation-State, the State itself (as the law) incarnating and representing the unity of the people-nation.

Capitalist law, according to Poulantzas, does not obscure real differences among peoples, rather, it defines and legitimizes these differences (both individual and class).⁵ The law consecrates individualization itself, simultaneously making everyone equal before the law—so individuals are held to be different and separate but within a framework of *homogeneity*, of equal treatment under uniform law and the unity of the people-nation. Under feudalism, the religious precepts of the Church assigned a piece of divine truth to each individual. But they also limited individuals' earthly power—statutes and privileges were based on *natural law*. Under capitalism the law embodies the capitalist relation of power and knowledge: there is neither knowledge nor truth in individuals except as it is defined by bourgeois law.

In keeping with his general dialectical model, Poulantzas sees in both these formulations the contradictions that shape the class struggle. First, law displaces the class struggle from the economic to the political arena by defining the rules of conflict away from a struggle over property to a struggle over the State apparatus. This was intended originally to permit the possibility of power struggles among different fractions of the bourgeoisie (workers, women, and other subordinated fractions of the working class did not have the right to vote), but it ultimately permitted the participation of dispossessed groups (through their struggle to participate), the modification of power relations in the State itself, and also provoked certain "interpretations" of law that favored the working class.

Capitalist law appears as the necessary form of a State that has to maintain relative autonomy of the fractions of a power bloc, in order to organize their unity under the hegemony of a class or a fraction of a class. . . . But capitalist law also rules the exercise of power for the dominated classes. Confronted by the struggle of the working class in the political arena, law organizes the framework of a permanent equilibrium of compromise imposed on the dominant classes by the dominated. This law also rules the exercise of physical repression: the juridical system, its "formal" and "abstract" liberties are also, we have to emphasize, the conquests of the popular masses. It is in this sense, and only in this sense, that modern law *poses limits* on the exercise of power and the intervention of the apparatuses of the State. (Poulantzas 1978, 100-101; my translation)

⁵ One example of the kind of institution spawned by the capitalist juridical-political system is schooling and school exams—these legitimize differences among individuals that serve as the basis for the division of labor, but more than that, they define incorporation into the social body and treatment before the law.

Bourgeois law, then, is tied directly to the monopoly of physical violence by the State, to the dispossession of the means of production from the worker and his reincorporation as an "individual" equal before the law. The individual worker is defined, legitimately, by institutions whose hierarchies of power are still rooted in the unequal class production system (including the State). Thus bourgeois law also has to allow the struggle over power in the State, a struggle that in and of itself allows the possibility to limit the exercise of power against the dominant classes.

The nation. Poulantzas's theory of the State contends that through law, the capitalist State legitimizes the dispossession of the worker from the means of production, and that the State reunifies the individual under the umbrella of the people-nation, a nation that (like the State) did not exist in societies without classes and continues to exist (like the State) in societies where the division of classes is "eliminated." This nation is not the same as the State; the capitalist State may incorporate several nations, such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1980, 94). Even so, the capitalist State seems, in particular, to be a *national* State; it works actively to establish a *national* unity, and modern nations generally move toward forming their own States.

For these reasons, the nation and the meaning of the nation become an important fourth element in Poulantzas's analysis of the State. He rejects the traditional Marxist notion that nations were formed under capitalism to unify the internal market for the facilitation of bourgeois development. This does not explain—according to Poulantzas—why this unification took place precisely at the level of the nation, or why the territorial boundaries that were chosen for the definition of the internal market were necessarily "national," or why it was organized around the concept of "unification" (1980, 96). Furthermore, why are territory, language, and tradition all part of this "national" definition of internal market?

Poulantzas formulates the problem in two parts: (a) in terms of territory, and (b) in terms of tradition. Territory, for Poulantzas, is the modern space in which the wage worker—fractionalized, isolated, separated from his means of production and the space defined by them (deterritorialized)—is reincorporated and assimilated. The modern nation redefines *inside* and *outside*: "within this very space are inscribed the movements and expanded reproduction of capital, the generalization of exchange, and monetary fluctuations" (1980, 104). The modern State's apparatuses—army, school, centralized bureaucracy, and prisons—materialize this spatial matrix. He argues that the people-nation of the capitalist State is the objective and essence of the State, whose frontiers are the outline of the material foundation of power. So, for the State, territory defines the borders within which it must reunify the deterritorialized workers resulting from capitalist

production, just as law abstracts the conditions under which the individual is reunified into a homogeneous, but redifferentiated whole. The national State realizes this unity of individuals in the people-nation in the same motion, as it were, by which it forges their individualization and their reseparation. This State doesn't unify a previously defined internal market, but installs a national unified market when it defines the national borders, borders that also define the inside as compared with the outside. At the same time, however, Poulantzas argues that the power which allows the State to define national borders, also allows it to extend those borders through the extension of capital, markets, and territories. And the other side of the coin is that it is not possible to extend national limits without first defining an *inside* (a homogenized, unified nation) that can then be extended infinitely (even into outer space).

The second element of Poulantzas's formulation of nation is "common historical tradition." He calls this the "temporal matrix of historicism," since under capitalism (he argues) the temporal matrix changes from a precapitalist concept of time that was homogeneous, reversible, repetitive, and not universally measurable, to a concept that is segmented, serial, divided into equal moments, and cumulative and irreversible (because it is oriented toward production, and through production, time is oriented toward an enlarged reproduction, a reproduction for universal goals).

In precapitalist societies, the sense of *present* was attributed to the sense of *before* and *after*. To understand origins of things in precapitalist times did not mean to retrace the history of accumulation (of experiences, of knowledge, of events) or progress that led to the present, but rather to attain the original omniscience. The beginning and the end, the before and the after, were wholly co-actualized in the always present divinity. Truth was immutable and progressively revealed, not cumulated. Power was embodied in the sovereign. The body politic did not emerge historically; rather, it resided in a continuous and homogeneous historicity, in which power itself was uninterrupted. Only the human body that incorporated that power changed. The territory associated with this temporal space had no definition, no inside and outside: "Pre-capitalist territories have no historicity of their own, since political time is the time of the prince-body, who is capable of extension, contraction, and movement in a continuous and homogeneous space" (1980, 110).

On the other hand, capitalist time is measurable and strictly controlled by clocks, chronometers, and precise calendars. This type of time poses a new problem: it has to be unified and universalized; there has to be created a unique and homogeneous measure of time that unifies the very separate temporal rhythms (worker time, bourgeois time, economic, social, and political time)—separated by the capitalist production process and its

extensions, the capitalist social system (classes), and political systems (the State)—into a "universalized" capitalist concept of time. "This matrix for the first time marks out the particular temporalities as *different temporalities*—that is to say, as rhythmical and metrical variations of a serial, segmented, irreversible and cumulative time" (1980, 110).

The nation, as developed in the capitalist State, together with its territory, tradition, and language, is a form of unification of people divided by capitalist production into classes—segmented, separated, individualized and isolated—into a new concept of space and time, a concept that is intended to keep the dominated class from realizing who and why it is. Instead, members of that class focus on the new individual's consciousness, on the commonality each has (under the State) with other members of the people-nation; he or she is *inside* the same territory, has the same historical goals, and is engaged in the same process of change as all other members of the people-nation. In addition, each individual is treated equally by the law.

The State as an Arena of Class Struggle

With the understanding of these four elements in Poulantzas's formulation of the capitalist reproduction, we can analyze briefly the logical continuation of this formulation. Capitalism and production separate and individualize workers. The State reintegrates these individuals into the people-nation under a set of institutions that homogenize and normalize them, differentiating them under a new set of rules, norms, values, history, tradition, language, and concepts of knowledge that emanate from the dominant class and its fractions. This same reintegration takes place in the context of class struggle, and all the institutions of society, including the State, are the product of that struggle. This is Poulantzas's particular contribution to theories of the State. He shows how the capitalist State provides the framework for struggles among fractions of the dominant class, and reintegrates the working class, as individuals detached from their means of production and their class, into a nation and a unifying set of rules and institutions. At the same time, the State provides the political space for class struggle, and so—just as the capitalist State emerged from a struggle—the State becomes *shaped* by class struggle. The State is key to the reintegration of workers (and bourgeoisie) into a unified whole that will be reproduced as capitalist society—as a class structure—from generation to generation, even while the working class remains separated, alienated, isolated, and exploited. Yet, contradictions arise in the superstructure itself—in the State—as their integration is taking place.

Poulantzas's analysis of these contradictions is divided into two parts:

(a) the relationship of the State to the dominant classes, and (b) the relationship of the State to the masses and their struggle.

Before this analysis, a word is necessary about contradictions internal to the State and how Poulantzas distinguishes his concept from two others (reviewed above). For Lenin, the State is fused with monopoly capitalism and is at the service of monopoly capitalists. It has neither autonomy nor *any political relevance* of its own—the State is reduced to an appendage of the power of the monopoly bourgeoisie (hence Popper's [1945] critique). This is what Poulantzas calls the "State-object." On the other hand, as the "State-subject," the State is autonomous in an absolute way; its autonomy is derived from its own will as a "rationalizing instance of civil society" (Poulantzas 1980, 129). This is the "institutionalist-functional-ist" view.

The "State-object" view argues that politics are determined by the State's position subordinate to the power of a single fraction of the bourgeoisie—monopoly capitalists. Contradictions in the State are secondary, the monolithic State changing only as a result of changes in the relative power of one fraction or another of the bourgeoisie. Contradictions take place *outside* the State in the "State-object" view.

The "State-subject" has its own power, an absolute autonomy with relation to social classes, always outside of the class structure, imposing "its" policy—that of a bureaucracy or of political elites—on the divergent and consensual interests of civil society. In this theory of the State, internal contradictions, Poulantzas claims, are also secondary, accidental, and episodic, due to friction among political elites or bureaucratic groups—contradictions external to social classes.⁶

Now we can turn to (a) Poulantzas's view of the relation between the State and the dominant classes, most of which is preserved from his earlier work. The State has principally an organizational role with regard to these classes. "It represents and organizes the dominant class or classes; or more precisely it represents and organizes the long-term political interests of a *power bloc*, which is composed of several bourgeois class fractions. . . . The State is able to play this role of organizing and unifying the bourgeoisie and the power bloc insofar as it enjoys *relative autonomy* of given fractions or components, and of various particular interests" (1980, 127).

For Poulantzas, as we have shown, the capitalist State is not an intrinsic

⁶ It is evident that Poulantzas considers such contradictions "secondary" in the sense that they are defined as independent of class structure and because they do not affect the fundamental development of capitalist production. But, as we have pointed out, differences between elite groups are considered "primary" by institutional functionalists—for one thing, they exclude any basic difference between "worker" interests and "capitalist" interests. So "primary" conflicts reside within the bureaucracy of the elite.

entity, but "a relation, more exactly a material condensation of the relation of conflicts between classes and fractions of classes as they are expressed . . . in the heart of the State" (1978, 141; my trans.). Therefore, the establishment of State policy has to be considered as the result of "class contradictions inherent in the structure of the State itself" (1978, 145; my trans.). Class contradictions constitute the State, are present in its material framework, and in turn frame its organization. The diverse fractions and classes in the power bloc participate in political domination only to the extent that they are present in the State. And "however paradoxical it may seem, the play of these contradictions within the State's materiality alone, makes possible the State's organizational role" (1980, 133). For it is the State as *unifier* that enables it to act as a reproducer, and unification means the existence of contradiction, of conflict, between different groups. In the first instance, the bourgeois State is structured to allow conflicts only among *dominant* groups who are in the power bloc. The politics of the State is therefore established by intra-State contradictions—the State is the institution where the fractions of the power bloc resolve their conflicts. This gives a chaotic and incoherent image to the State, each fraction trying to gain at the expense of others.

At any moment of time, Poulantzas points out, one fraction is dominant, and the State produces a global strategy that favors this fraction.

But this unity of power of the State doesn't establish itself by monopoly capitalists physical take-over of the State and their coherent will. This centralization-unity is inscribed in the hierarchic-bureaucratized structure of the capitalist State, the result of the reproduction of the social division of labor in the heart of the State (and included under the manual work—intellectual work form) and the result of its specific separation from the relations of production . . . also . . . of the predominant place of that class or hegemonic fraction in the heart of the State. . . .

. . . [U]nity is established by a whole chain of subordination of certain apparatuses to others and by the domination of one apparatus or branch of the State (the army, a political party, a ministry) which crystallizes the interests of the hegemonic fraction over the other branches or apparatuses, centers of resistance of other fractions of the power bloc. (1978, 150-151; my translation)

Poulantzas therefore describes a State where conflict not only takes place over State power, but among apparatuses of the State and *within* each apparatus. The centralized unity of the State, he argues, doesn't reside in a pyramid whose summit has to be controlled in order to control the State—various State apparatuses could be controlled by the bourgeoisie, for example, even if the Left were to control the legislature (or, in the Chilean

case, the executive branch). “*The State is not a monolithic bloc but a strategic battlefield*” (1978, 152; my trans.; italics added). In this later work, Poulantzas does for the State what Gramsci did for civil society: Poulantzas takes the Gramscian concept of dominant-class hegemony in all its complexity and pervasiveness and articulates it for the State. The State itself becomes an arena of struggle.

Proceeding to (b) the relationship of the State to the masses and their struggle, the State, then, not only resolves conflicts among fractions in the power bloc but also between the power bloc and the dominated classes. Poulantzas rejects the Leninist (and Gramscian) idea that the contradiction between dominant and dominated classes stay outside the State. In that concept, the dominated classes can only exert pressure on the bourgeois State. He does agree that power and mass struggle originate outside the State, but as far as they are political struggles, they have to include the State. For Poulantzas, the structure of the State—its hierarchical-bureaucratic organization—includes the specific presence of the dominated classes and their struggle. In other words, it is impossible to understand the organization and functions of the State without including its role of mediating conflict between dominant and dominated classes, particularly its attempts to divide and disorganize the dominated masses (but at the same time compromising with many of their demands).

However, Poulantzas also argues that it is false to conclude that the presence of popular classes in the State signifies that they can stay there very long without a radical transformation of the State. “But the popular classes have always been present in the State, without that ever having changed anything of its hard core” (1980, 143). “[The State structure] does indeed retain the dominated classes within itself, but it retains them precisely as *dominated classes*. . . . The action of popular masses within the State is a necessary condition of its transformation, but is not itself a sufficient condition” (1980, 143).

Furthermore, even though the contradictions between the dominant and dominated classes are mediated by the structure of the State (and the power relations expressed in that structure), there is not necessarily agreement at any given time among the fractions of the power bloc on how to deal with such contradictions and the struggle with the masses. All this is condensed in the internal division and contradictions in the State, *among* its diverse branches, networks, and apparatuses, and *within* each one.

Thus, the State, in all its functions (ideological, repressive, and economic) is marked by contradictions, because class struggle takes place *in the heart of the State* even as it tries to maintain an external dominant-class hegemony. Poulantzas insists that the State is neither an instrumentalist depository (object) of dominant-class power, nor a subject that pos-

sesses an abstract power of its own outside the class structure. It is rather a place for the dominant class to organize itself strategically in its relation to the dominated classes. It is a place and center of the *exercise* of power, but it does not possess its own power. Furthermore, under monopoly capitalism, the ideological and repressive functions of the State (according to Poulantzas) are less important than under commercial capitalism. “*The totality of the operations of the State are currently being reorganized in relation to its economic role*” (1980, 168). The State not only reproduces labor power and the relations of production through ideology and repression, it intervenes directly in the crises of production by investing in private production (in the military industry in the United States, for example) and by producing itself, rescues sectors of industry that have become unprofitable but are crucial employers and domestic suppliers of particular goods. This makes even the class struggle in production enter the State apparatuses, since the State is a producer.

CONCLUSION

Poulantzas’s work reflects the development and transformation of a structuralist view of the State into one that is more historical-specific and where social movements play a key role. Structuralism was and is widely criticized for its ahistorical and deterministic view that the State corresponds to a mode of production, its form and function determined by the structure of the class relations, and, as Althusser saw it, in the capitalist mode, determined by *economic* class relations. Poulantzas originally applied such a theory to the capitalist State, accentuating the ideological role of the State determined by the class relations of production. This necessarily “relatively autonomous” class State appears above class struggle when in fact it reproduces the dominance of the capitalist class. For Poulantzas as structuralist, the State in the capitalist mode of production is “determined” in fulfilling this reproductive function, not by direct control of the capitalist class, but rather by the *class nature* of the ideological and repressive State apparatuses. Poulantzas could argue that in capitalist production, capital (and labor) is fractionalized, but a fraction (or fractions) of capital can—specifically through the class State—organize its hegemony. And because the State *is* a capitalist-class State, labor necessarily *cannot* use the State in the same way.⁷

The criticisms of this position came quickly. In England, from Miliband;

⁷ Poulantzas has fractions of the capitalist class establishing hegemony through the State. He does not argue, as does Offe (see Chapter 5) that the State organizes class interests *for* the fractionalized capitalist class.

in Germany, from the derivationists and Offe (see Chapter 5); in Italy, from Ingrao (see Chapter 6); and in America, from James O'Connor (see Chapter 8). Poulantzas's reaction to these criticisms was to retain his fundamental analysis of relative autonomy and the State's roots in class relations, but to abandon the determinist, structuralist nature of that autonomous class State. This he did in two important ways.

First, he argues that as capitalism developed, the capitalist State changed. Thus, capitalist relations of production, the class structure, and the State are historical-specific within the capitalist mode of production. There is no "structure" for the State; rather, the form and function of the State is shaped by class struggle in capitalism and the State's role in that struggle.

Second, he argued that the "displacement" of the class struggle from production into the State brings that struggle into the "heart of the State" (1978, 141). The forms and functions of the State are not determined by the economic class relations in some abstract sense, but by the historical expression of those relations in the form of struggle. The subordinated classes therefore also shape the State even while it is a class State, and even while it is used by the dominant fraction to establish and extend dominant capitalist hegemony.

A State contested by subordinate classes may become dysfunctional as a site where the dominant classes can establish their hegemony. In that case, the State may have to be changed drastically (e.g., become authoritarian rather than democratic). Poulantzas became convinced that democracy is a crucial issue in the transition to socialism, for it is democracy (even "bourgeois" democracy) that is simultaneously a working-class victory and a principal form of subordinate-class contestation in the class State (see Chapter 6).

There exist a number of difficulties even in this last work, primarily in understanding how autonomous the capitalist State is and what the relationship is between nonclass movements, class struggle, and the "class" State. Is the State a site where dominant capitalist fractions organize their hegemony, or where an autonomous State bureaucracy develops and extends capitalism for capitalists in their long-term interest? As nontraditional class social movements redefine the civil society (and the State), and class struggle in the State changes social-class relations, how is the nature of class struggle itself affected? These are key questions that Poulantzas did not answer even though his analysis certainly led to asking those questions. Furthermore, he retained in his work an abstraction that is not only common to Althusser but to the French philosophical tradition. But Poulantzas's structuralist origins accentuated this tradition's ahistorical, aspecific characteristics. Others, like Cardoso and Faletto (see Chapter 7) in Latin Amer-

ica showed that an historical-structural approach to understanding the State applied to specific case studies adds important dimensions, lacking in Poulantzas's more abstract formulations, to State theories. Despite these important limitations, Poulantzas gives us a solid theoretical reference point for current discussions of class and State.