

Sociology 924. Reading Interrogations #2. Therborn

September 22, 2011

1. Emanuel Ubert

Loss of state power as reproduction, origin of contradictions, topology of subsystems, crisis, systemic change

“State power is determined not only in the mode of reproduction, but also in those of loss and transformation. The mechanisms of reproduction may in fact function equally as ones of revolution” (p.176). The process of revolution thus develops either via internal contradictions or via the disarticulation of uneven development. According to Therborn, internal contradictions do not exclusively have to arise from the economic sphere/ mode of production, but can also be rooted in the state (link to Offe?) or the ideological superstructure. In the political realm they arise in the form of contradictions between domination and execution, and ideologically between qualification and subjection. Across those domains, contradictions (as well as disarticulations) seem to be largely located at what Erik terms the situational and institutional levels of power (“Class and Politics”).

1. *Origin of crisis & topology of subsystems*: With state power essentially rooted in society’s class relations and thus ultimately in the economic sphere and the modes of production (also outlined by Barrow), and the state apparatus being a “crystallization of the relationships and divisions of labor dominant in society” (p. 150), how can political and ideological contradictions (and ultimately structural changes) ever originate outside (or at least in isolation from) the economic sphere? **[Comment: I think the idea that a contradiction can be internal to the state does not imply that the “origin” of the contradiction would have to be in some sense unconnected to the economic sphere. Rather, the point is that there could be certain properties of the state which are incompatible with the functions it is called upon to fulfill, thus generating a contradiction between form & function (or domination & execution in Therborn’s terminology). The contradiction is between how the state as organized and what it tries to do. But the reason why it needs to do these things can be the result of demands rooted in the economy].** What is the precise topology of conceptual “subsystems” in Therborn, and how are they linked to each other?

2. *Systemic change*: Are the contradictions and disarticulations Therborn theorizes capable of leading to systemic transformations of capitalism and thus to a change of the mechanisms of reproduction itself? According to Therborn, could, for example, political contradictions theoretically not only lead to situational and institutional transformations, but also to a systemic transformation of the modes of production, the class structure and thus by extension the entire capitalist system? **[Comment: I am not sure that there is any place in *WDTRCDWIR* where Therborn discusses the process by which one type of state is transformed into another type of state. Towards the end of the book there is an extended discussion of the role of communist parties and the Cold War in the “history of the present”, and the suggestion is that mass based working class parties are central to the prospects of transformations of the state. The implication of the earlier part of the book is that the capacity of such parties to form alliances capable of actually transforming state power depends upon the extent of internal contradictions in the state (or contradictions of form and function as suggested above), but I don’t think there is a systematic exposition of the interaction between (a) such contradictions and (b) mobilizing capacity of popular forces under political leadership of working class parties.]**

2. Bob Thomas

Therborn is interested in theorizing the organizational structure of the state, particularly as it relates to feudal, capitalist, and socialist societies. He separates this structure into the class character of the state as well as into the class power of the state. This division divides the main two sections of the text. The class character of the state is defined in terms of inputs, transformations, and outputs. The class power of the state is defined as those effects of

state action which maintain class relations. Among other things the character of state power is determined by the development of the mode of production and the place of the mode of production within the international stage.

I'm interested in discussing the input component of the so-called class character of the state. He says on page 66 that class relations within a capitalist society determines the boundary between what is private and what is public. I'm not sure exactly what he means here. If we look at the American public University last 50 years we can see an increasing privatization of these organizations, marked specifically by reductions in state funding. Can we explain this increasing privatization in terms of class relations? Were class relations different during the glory days of the public University than they are now? Lastly, can we explain the differences in state funding across American states in terms of class relations? For example University of Michigan is essentially a private organization, however the North Dakota State University system has substantial funds. Is there some sort of different class relations going on here? **[This is an interesting kind of transformation in terms of Therborn's framework. Perhaps what we are observing is a new "type" of capitalist state – one in which there is a blurred or fuzzy boundary between public and private, in the form of public/private partnership and various forms of interpenetration. In the feudal state the public is absorbed into the private (the royal household/estate); in the capitalist state (in Therborn's analysis) there is a clear separation of public and private; in the socialist state the private is absorbed into the public. Perhaps in the neoliberal state there is an interpenetration of aspects of the public and private.]**

3. João Alexandre Peschanski

* What are the points of contradiction of the capitalist state, given Therborn's focus on organizational technologies? We might be able to distinguish general potential disjunctures from those that are specifically capitalist. Some general contradictions might be the tendency of state apparatuses to "crystallize" some **social relations through inertia that are independent of class relations** (35) and the fact that state apparatuses must simultaneously express class domination and respond to needs of society as a whole. **[The argument in this section of Therborn is about a temporal disjuncture between the effects of class relations on the state in time 1 and the class imperatives on the state in time 2: the "crystallization" is not really of "some" social relations, but of class relations. The contradiction in this case is still, in a sense, a distinctively capitalist contradiction that occurs because of diachronic character of the formation, institutionalization, and functioning of the state. Other contradictions are synchronic – the result of competing demands on the state at any given moment, or between some kind of distinctive state interest and class interest at a given moment.]** Some specifically capitalist contradictions are related to specific dynamics of class struggle in capitalism, shaping how state processes are determined, and unintended consequences of organizational technologies in capitalism. For instance, the fact that the capitalist state is tax-seeking might lead to conflicts between state interests and capitalist factions, that might resist taxation.

* Therborn does not spend as much time talking about monopoly capitalism as he does with other modes of production. Is the distinction between monopoly and competitive capitalism really compelling? **[We might want to take Therborn's effort here as suggesting the possibilities of (so to speak) a systematic typology of subspecies of the capitalist state. Monopoly Capitalism is not really a different mode of production, but a specific form of the capitalist mode of production. Perhaps the same logic of functional correspondences and crystallizations of class relations that is chartered at the mode-of-production level of abstraction can be mapped at the lower level of abstraction of forms of capitalism.]**

* What does Therborn really mean by "state power?" At some point, he says, "State power is a relation between social class forces expressed in the content of state policies" (34), which makes the term very similar to class power and how it imprints itself on policy-making. **[Perhaps what is in play here is the idea that there are a variety of forms of class power, a variety of way in which the power rooted in class relations is organized institutionally. There is class power within market relations, for example, and class power within the organizational apparatuses of the capitalist economy (firms). Maybe, Therborn is suggesting that "State" power**

is one of the forms that class power can take. This doesn't necessarily mean that state power is no more than a form of class power – there could be ways in which it is also reflective of other kinds of social relations and the power associated with those other forms.] At another point, he makes a clear distinction between state and class power, "When we say that a class holds state power, we mean that what is done through the state positively acts upon the (re-)production of the mode of production, of which the class in question is the dominant bearer" (144), which makes the term refer to some state capacity to reproduce the system of production. [A lot of the difficulty here revolves around the use of agency-words like "holds" – a class holds state power – when the discussion seems much more anchored in an account of functional relations and effects.]

4. Taylan Acar

I think Therborn's book is not only an unequalled guidance in theorizing state from a Marxist point of view, but it is at the same time a very compelling critique of the contemporary understanding regarding the relationship of state and classes. In this respect I have three questions to be discussed:

First of all, seemingly **having a less clear-cut definition** of the relationship between state and classes, I think we can discuss Therborn's arguments on state and economy in relation to the Offe's crisis of crisis management discussion. [I didn't quite understand this phrase – are you saying that Therborn has a less clear cut definition than Offe? I'm not sure what this refers to.] Both by refusing the functionalist interpretations of state and monopoly capital relationship and by defining the state as a "super-subject," Therborn analyzes the relationship as a smoother one in comparison to Offe. [I don't exactly see why you think Therborn's account is "smoother", less prone to contradiction. There are indeed differences – Therborn's contradictions are more connected to temporal disjunctures – the state is a crystallization of class relations at a specific historical moment and then, later, it is called upon to do things that this form of apparatus has difficult doing. But why is that smoother than the contradictory functionality explore by Offe?] I am wondering how do the analyses of Offe and Therborn about the relationship between capitalist class and state relate to/contradict with each other especially in terms of crisis of the capitalist system and the intervention of state to the crises.

Secondly, Therborn identifies mediation and reproduction as two important mechanisms as the links between the state and economy. I want to discuss how these mechanisms actually work. For example, at some point he brings in ideology (p. 173) in terms of establishing mediation among the citizens, however I am not very clear whether there is a room for such a culturalist explanation in his theory. [I am not sure what you mean by a culturalist explanation. Ideology need not be an instance of "culturalism", if by that you refer to some autonomous sphere of culture with it own internal cultural dynamics. Ideology is something that operates through distinctive apparatuses in Therborn and affects the subjectivities of actors (his subjectation & qualification processes). These matter because class struggle, and not just class relations, generates effects. I am not sure what problem you are seeing in this.] In addition to that how should we identify the social mechanisms and agents responsible for the creation of the nationhood in order to create a guise for the capitalist system?

Finally, I want to spend some time thinking about how do capitalist states differ from each other. Do United States and Germany fundamentally differ in terms of their capitalisms? Or is US "exceptional" in terms of its lack of strong working class organizations and the unique role and status of the corporations? Therborn spends time discussing this issue under the notion of formats of representation, however this discussion pertains more to the regime and political structure rather than the economy of the country. [There are lots of interesting issues here – the theoretical foundations for a typology of forms of variations within a given abstract kind of state. There are a range of possible solutions in play here, but they all involve trying to develop appropriate concepts for different levels of abstraction in the analysis of the same empirical object. Some of the possibilities here

include: 1) Given states represent different forms of combination of capitalist and noncapitalist elements/relations/forms; 2) states combine distinctive class crystallization with nonclass crystallizations (eg religious or cultural crystallizations); 3) different forms of capitalism generate different forms of state apparatus, and a given capitalist society is always an amalgam of a variety of forms of capitalism, no one of which may be dominant; etc.

5. Michael Billeaux

There are two main questions I have about Therborn's book; the first is a general concern about the task of explanation, the second is a specific question about the role of state personnel.

1) Therborn begins the book by arguing that his project is an *explanatory* one, but much of what is crucial to his argument seemed under-explained. From the standpoint of taxonomy and description, there is no doubt that the book is thorough and useful. But in answering the question, for example, What determines the input mechanism which selects tasks to be handled by the state? We aren't given much more than a mention of dynamics of the mode of production and the struggle between classes, without the actual mechanism of determination (i.e., the question "What do the dynamics of the mode of production have to do with task selection?" isn't addressed directly). In this case, (pg 63) reference is made to the division of public and private spheres in bourgeois society, but the border between those spheres is itself subject to contestation and change, so this doesn't seem to get us very far. Several explanations in the book have this character. **[There are two different sorts of concerns you seem to be expressing here. First: how do we explain the existence of the distinction form of public/private demarcation in the capitalist state? Second: through what causal process does this specific aspect of the state – the public/private demarcation in the task selection process – actually shape state policies and actions? Is this right? I think the book is pretty good on the second of these issues – explaining how this input-filtering mechanism affects state actions (by largely insulating the use of private property from deep state control, especially appropriation). It is, perhaps, a little less clear on the first, beyond involving the idea of these aspects of the state being "crystallizations" of class struggle and the balance of class forces. Basically that is a way of saying that it is victories, defeats, and compromises in class struggles (which include struggles among class fractions and the like) which shapes and transforms state apparatuses in different ways. That is a very clear argument, but I do think it points to a specific kind of explanation.]**

2) The second point is a more specific question regarding the weight given to state personnel. Early in the essay on state power, the importance of interpersonal linkages between the ruling class and the state is minimized. But the character of the relationship between state personnel and the ruling class seems to figure prominently in the discussion later, especially in the discussion on "formats of representation." What do we make of this? **[I don't think the two discussions are really inconsistent. In the formats of representation discussion Therborn emphasizes how rare it is that the form of representation revolves around drawing political leaders directly from capitalist economic apparatuses. This would be the interpersonal form of representation – but it is rare both because it doesn't facilitate the mediation function of the state very well (i.e. the relationship of the state to the subordinate classes) and because the disunity and fragmentation of the capitalist class makes such direct representation a less effective form of political representation of the class. He then goes on to discuss other formats of representation of the capitalist class all of which have problems of one sort or another. This simply reflects the complexity and contradictory character of the problems that need solving through institutional solutions.]**

6. Matt Kearney

I would like to discuss the role of affective preferences and dispositions within forms of state organization. Therborn emphasizes conscious beliefs about what exists, what is possible, and what is right (172). But as I read it,

his analysis also calls out for a theory of the lower layer of social desirability. For instance, loyalty to the feudal lord seems to have both affective and financial components. The parliamentary politician must personally cajole other ruling class members to be affective. The plebiscitary politician must have "attractive personal qualities," which presumably both shape and are shaped by the dominant preferences already institutionalized in the society (53). Similarly, the cadre cannot unite or organize the working class if her message fails to resonate with those same preferences.

So am I correct in thinking that Therborn's analysis would be more complete if he did not bracket pre-existing dispositions, specifically how those dispositions were generated, and the details of how they reciprocally interface with roles and processes within the state? How could Therborn's analysis be expanded or modified by a theory of affective desirability? **[You are right that Therborn doesn't spend much time on this issue, either here or really in the book on ideology. But how much difference could this really make? What range of phenomena would be better explained with a systematic addition of a theory of emotion and how it figures in human agency? I agree that there are specific problems for which this is crucial. For example, the difficulty in finding political solutions to conflicts which are infused with resentment/anger over past wrongs, especially when the resentment is on both sides, is an example where the emotional component of the motivations undercut the possibility of interest-based, rational compromise. But, for the issue in play in Therborn's book what specific issues would be significantly pushed forward with a theory of emotions that gave these a general explanatory role to play in understanding the state apparatus/state power problem?]**

7. Lindsey Twin

I appreciate how Therborn conceptualizes the state as being comprised by two analytically distinct components – state power and the state apparatus. They have separate dynamics which mutually constitute each other. However, I am not satisfied with his line of demarcation. He defines state power as class forces expressed in the content of policies. The class character of state power is expressed in their *effect*. Power has causal mechanisms. It is a social relation in which an actor coerces others by the threat or use of sanctions, which are class-specific. Actors' means of exercising power define internal sources of change and development across modes of production. **[I am not sure why you think the fact that power has causal mechanisms means that the class character of state power should not be defined by the effects of the exercise of power. Are you saying you want to define the class character of power by who uses it – it counts as class power when a class actor uses it? I am not sure what your counterproposal is, or what precisely your objection to Therborn's strategy is.]**

Therborn defines the state apparatus as the internal organization of the state. It is an expression of class domination and execution of rule-making, decision-making and adjudicating tasks. I argue that rule-making and enforcing constitutes state power. The state apparatus is the organizational framework from which state actors carry out these tasks. Therborn lumps these together. I believe that this division would best capture the internally differentiated and sometimes conflicting dynamics of the state. **[I don't think Therborn lumps together the institutional structures through which rule making takes place and the actual activities of making rules. The actual activity is the exercise of state power, but this exercise takes place through rule-making structures.]**

8. Ayca Zayim

Therborn answers the question of "what does the ruling class do when it rules?" by highlighting how the ruling class reproduces its domination in the economic, political and ideological relations (or spheres). The class rule is

exercised through state power, or to put it differently, through interventions and policies of the state and their consequent effects on the position of this class. Herein, the economic, political and ideological spheres correspond to the forces (and relations) of production, state apparatus and the ideological system (p.161). The class character of the state, in turn, is defined by the effects of state intervention in these three spheres. Therborn distances his analysis from functionalist approaches; such as he contends that “state power is exercised not according to a pre-established functionalist harmony, but in and through the struggle of antagonistic classes” (p.146). Hence, who holds state power is shaped by class struggle and defined by the effects of state action. Firstly, are there any potential drawbacks of this definition? Although it clearly allows the researchers to bypass the questions regarding ‘interests’ of the actors involved, can we assume that the effects of state intervention reflect the interests or intentions of the actors involved without any ‘distortion’? Or this assumption is not useful in itself (i.e. it does not improve our explanation)? Does not bypassing ‘objective’ interests of actors or overlooking contingency or unintended consequences of state intervention have the potential of distorting our analysis of who holds state power? **[To some extent dropping “interests” from the discussion is a terminological choice rather than a high stakes theoretical choice. After all, Therborn evaluates the power “effects” in terms of the extent to which state policies further, maintain, go against or break the relations of production. The first two of these are clearly what in ordinary language is called the “interests” of the ruling class. I think the rejection of interests as a way of talking about this comes from the specific intellectual context of 1970s debates between structural approaches to the state and anti-structuralist approaches, but may not matter so much.]**

Secondly, if ruling class domination is to be ensured in the economic, political and ideological spheres, two relations have to be ensured in the state: that of representation and mediation. It is through these mechanisms that the ruling class holds state power. While Therborn formulates different “bourgeois formats of representation”, one can plausibly argue that the format which would be least conducive to bourgeois rule is that of “the party of labor”. Even Therborn concedes that “to the founders of historical materialism such a circumstance would have been absolutely inconceivable” (p.209). This format of presentation, I believe, has the greatest potential to demonstrate in great detail the class character of the state under capitalism within a structural framework (for example, in this case, one can easily dismiss some instrumentalist theories that might have more affinity with the formats of “capitalist institutionalization” or “notables” where the rulers are elected from within the bourgeoisie or their allies). Hence, it can demonstrate in the most explicit way how the bourgeoisie can hold state power even in the absence of ‘control’ of the government. Therborn explains this seemingly paradox mainly in terms of “the very nature of capitalism” (i.e. differentiation between formal equality and practical subordination, capitalist exploitation being a non-zero game etc.) and the bourgeoisie’s “popular influence” (p.212) -- the latter referring to ideology. I would like to discuss what the exact role of ideology is in this framework, both as a sphere where ruling class domination is reproduced and one which feeds the other two spheres. Which structural features of the state apparatus engender interventions that tend to reproduce domination in the ideological system? In this book Therborn does not elaborate the role of ideology in detail although he notes the role of the bourgeoisie’s “popular influence”, how bourgeois parties are able to capitalize on nationalism and religion (p.192) and the existence of “captive populations”—but these ‘explanations’ lie scattered. How can we integrate his later analysis on ideology with his theory of class rule? **[I am not sure that the paradox of a labor party, in spite of itself, constituting a format of representation of the capitalist class, is mainly explained by ideology. Perhaps it is in some respects, but isn’t the fact that this party still has to function within a state apparatus characterized by all of the other organizational properties of the capitalist state – around task selection, rule making, tax dependency, etc. – the more fundamental reason why such parties end up having to formulate policies that mostly “maintain” the relations of production rather than “go against” them?]**

9. Paul Pryse

A frustrating aspect of this book is Therborn's insistence on taking the USSR, Eastern Bloc countries and others as examples of real socialism, a political choice which seems to have affected his credulity towards the claims of leaders of these countries. For example, in his discussion of technologies of organization, he claims that cadres in 'socialist countries' can *lead* rather than *command*, and that state initiatives in these countries are based on voluntary effort and political commitment by the participants. I don't think many people, maybe not even Therborn, would try to defend this today. Does this affect his theory? My instinct is that we can cut through the confusion and preserve his method for determining the class character of the state, but I'm curious what others think. **[I agree with you completely that the theoretical characterization of organizational properties of the socialist state proposed by Therborn don't apply to the USSR and Eastern Bloc countries, and that his attempt to treat them as partial, if perhaps distorted, exemplars of this form of the state is problematic. Still, the question remains whether the conceptual framework properly identifies salient features of a socialist state from a Marxist perspective. Is the idea of cadre leadership, in contrast to bureaucratic officials, a plausible characterization of the difference between socialist and capitalist administration? I personally found the theoretical points generally pretty compelling even if the empirical referents seemed unsatisfactory.]**

10. Aliza Luft

Therborn suggests that the primary object of study, if one is interested in what rulers do when they rule, is the state. By analyzing and comparing the state in society through different "moments of power", it becomes possible to understand the effects of the state on the reproduction of given modes of production and, as a result, the conditions for change within the social structure and relationships in which people live (which determine possibilities for change and revolt). Therborn also suggests that necessary to understanding what kind of society we are studying and what the effects are of the state on society are questions of *power to* ___ and *power over* _____. The ruling class reproduces itself through the state which mediates its interactions with the ruled.

Taking all this in to consideration, if ruling classes are engaged in reproduction via repression and gaining representation, and classes are people who occupy relations based on production, then wouldn't it make sense to devote more study to the subjects of the ruled in relation to the rulers and the state? Therborn's work is great, but I wonder what it would look like if more of the relationship between the rulers and the ruled, between people who occupy relations based on relations of power, were taken in to consideration. **[I think you are correct that Therborn pays much less attention to the problem of mediation than representation – that is, to the problem of how the triad of ruling class/state/ruled class works than to how the state operates to translate ruling class interests into outcomes (I know he doesn't use the term interests for this, but in effect that is what he is doing). Some other work we will look at, like Przeworski, places the problem of class compromise at the center of the analysis, and this requires attention to the strategies and dilemmas within collective actions of subordinate classes.]**

11. Kathryn Anderson

Therborn's book is provocative, clear, thoroughly educational, and very well written. He tackles the vital question of how to avoid a dictatorship of the proletariat, in other words, '(how) can a socialist state be organized so as to reproduce the domination of the working population so as to further the development of a classless society?' (p11)

Through thorough empirical exposition of feudal, capitalist, and socialist/communist regimes from Europe to China, he illustrates the fundamental contradiction between the need for the previously downtrodden and exploited classes to rule and the need for the rulers to have bureaucratic and technocratic expertise (p 124).

Therborn shows that in all regimes, including communist China and the USSR, the percentage of high-ranking state officials who previously were laborers or peasants is very slim, though it is larger in some regimes than in others.

However, Therborn also shows optimism: “However... the position of the cadre [the collective leader and organizer of labor] is also contradictory. He owes his relationship to managers and bureaucrats to his links of representation with the masses. Thus, as the latter grow and develop, the cadre will have either to integrate himself with the collectivity or to be thrown onto the ‘dustheap of history’, once his epochal task is fulfilled.”

My question is about the circumstances that are required in order to maintain a collectivity that is able to throw anybody into the ‘dustheap of history’. That is, how can the collectivity be protected from being ignorant of and disinterested in the form of rule to which they are subjected and alternative modes of social organization (p. 171)?

[Therborn’s exploration of the socialist state and the relationship of cadres to the masses should, I think, be treated as a suggestive outline of an agenda rather than a full blown theoretical argument. There are just too many gaps. Mainly this is due, I think, to the lack of compelling empirical evidence and his reliance on scattered observations from largely failed socialist efforts. The issue you raise here is the problem of accountability of leadership to the class it is supposed to represent. In the case of capitalism this accountability of political leaders and bureaucratic officials to the capitalist class is mostly accomplished not by some mechanism of direct disciplining of the persons, but by the functioning of the system and its associated filter mechanisms. In the case of socialism, however, this doesn’t seem adequate. It is hard to see how cadre accountability would be possible without robust, effective democratic empowerment of ordinary people.]

12. Yotaro Natani

I would like to question whether Therborn has an adequate theory of transformation from one mode of production to another, from one state apparatus to another – especially as it relates to the shift from capitalism to socialism.

According to Therborn, the ruling class maintains its dominance in the economy and state, but there is a contradiction in any class society between class domination and the carrying out of general societal tasks. Eventually the reproductive mechanisms are destabilized through that contradiction, and a new ruling class takes control of those mechanisms. Thus, Therborn subscribes to a ruptural transformation view of social revolution: society transforms into one that has a new class structure and new state organization.

One potential problem with this view is that it presumes social change will take place through the destabilization of a mode of production. But like we have said when studying Offe, it is possible for a political-economic system survive despite destabilizing tendencies. **[Both things could be true: destabilization of the system of reproduction could be a necessary but not sufficient conditions for transformation. A political economic system could survive because the sufficient conditions are not met. Therborn suggests that there are agency-centered conditions that also have to be met in his brief critical comments on legitimation and ideology (p. 171 when he suggests why people may not revolt).]**

There is also the question of agency in such transformation. Therborn implies that class polarization will take place under capitalism and especially monopoly capitalism, and that the growing proletariat class will be the agents who can transform the state and social structures (with the help and leadership of the cadre group/class). This is, again, akin to a very orthodox view of the theory of history. Another way of asking my question: If we dispense with historical materialism (due to lack of empirical support), is it necessary to come up with new theoretical specifications of what a socialist state organization might look like, or is that even possible?

13. Mitch Schwartz

Therborn's underlying normative ideal is a classless communist society, but he doesn't dedicate much time to its realization. And when he does address this ideal, I'm not convinced by his argument. At the end of part one, he explains the contradictory dialectic of socialism in the tension between the empowerment of the exploited proletariat and the practical needs for bureaucratic and technocratic institutions to which the collective submits. As I understand it, this means that under socialism the proletariat is empowered but a state is still required, and by nature the proletariat remains subservient to the state.

He returns to this idea in part three, saying that as the proletariat gains power under socialism, it opens the path to a classless communist society because the proletariat has no class to exploit. But the transition from socialism to communism understood as such has its own contradictions. First, this doesn't explain the problem of the proletariat being subservient to the state under socialism. A classless communist society seems to imply a stateless society as well. So how does the state die in the transition from socialism to capitalism? **[Therborn, like I think all Marxists who adopt the rhetoric of a classless society, doesn't really have a theory of the problem of collective coordination under such conditions. In a way the theoretical structure used to explain class rule – all state power is an expression of class power, for example – blocks a serious exploration of the problem of coercion and state-rule under conditions in which classes are marginalized or disappear. I don't think it is plausible to see states as *simply* embodiments of class rule, even if they express that rule. I would argue that any complex society needs some kind of institution for creating binding rules over territories because forms of cooperation and social order will not be self-reproducing without such an institution, and this means states will be needed even if the specific problem of reproducing relations of class exploitation has disappeared.]** Second, although the proletariat may not be able to exploit the bourgeoisie, won't wielding power over them and imposing a new paradigm further the class warfare rather than dissolve it? **[The basic idea here is that the proletariat – or, perhaps, the broad masses of the people – “dominate” the bourgeoisie in the sense of preventing the re-emergence of dominant capitalist class relations. This is like saying after the fall of feudalism or the abolition of slavery the aristocracy or slave owners were being dominated by the post-feudal ruling class. “Domination” here is mostly a structural issue, not a question of direct control over the actions of the people from a previously dominant class.]**
