

## POWER

### IV. THE SOURCES, STRUCTURE, AND TRANSFORMATION OF POWER

#### A) Organizing questions:

1. How do power differentials arise?
2. How are differences maintained or changed over time?

#### B) Alternative perspectives:

1. Power differentials are an inevitable consequence of HUMAN NATURE.
2. Power differentials arise and are maintained through SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

#### C) Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)

Neither a system builder, nor philosopher, no concise, single theory. Diffuse impressionistic observations with nonetheless notable consistency. Sought to discover the order of political activity by case studies of the past. Comparisons across history were possible because human nature was changeless, and essentially evil. The Prince.

"Men are ungrateful, fickle, lying, hypocritical, fearful and grasping" creatures.

Although innately evil, human nature does not preclude social cooperation. Insatiable desires and limitless ambition leads to self-preservation; short-sighted focus on immediate rewards, not remote consequences; imitative, incline to follow example of others, authority figures. Essential evil human nature can be molded by leadership and organization. Self-preservation and short-sightedness leads to manipulation by civic leaders; imitativeness is available for leadership and organization.

conflict is permanent condition of society, a product of human nature; the basic conflict is between common people and the great and powerful. Cause of domestic strife is lust for power and domination. The way to channel human desires for useful ends is through the state which offers means to create conditions for security and well-being. Best government is one where rank corresponds to ability (skill, foresight, initiative, decisiveness, flexibility, deception - a breaking away from human nature) and force must always be available and judiciously administered.

Power, and use of power, essential to society, achievement of socially desirable ends. Implicit interactive message (leader must know followers.) Set stage for rationalism and enlightenment.

D) Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

With John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau is considered one of the "social contract" theorists. Begins with different premise, however. Society is a human artifact, which humans can alter as they see fit. Humans are not "social" or "political" by nature as Aristotle claimed. Society is imposed on humanity out of fear, self-preservation. Politics should be concerned with humans as they are, not as they should be, not some idealized vision of humanity. The Leviathan, 1651.

Human behavior defines the good and the evil: what we desire is good, what we fear is evil. Thus good and evil have different meanings for different people. In the state of nature, "the life of man, is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short".

How do we achieve peace and order which are antithetical to our nature? How do we go beyond the state of nature? Reason dictates that we shun death (the chief evil) and attempt by all means to preserve the self; the common grounds among our differences: the desire for self-preservation. Seek peace - the fundamental dictate of the state of nature by ceding our rights to all things in that state to a sovereign (state/society) who grants security. Sovereign may take any form (democratic, aristocratic, monarchic) but its power is limitless. The final test of sovereign/state is that it keep the peace.

Power arises out of necessity. We have no choice but to submit to authority if society is to be realized. This is the basis of people's willingness to submit to the social contract.

E) Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923)

Italian economist and sociologist, working at turn of the century, flowering of social science disciplines, makes contributions in several fields. Offers theory of elites as explanation for how come the few come to rule the many.

Elites are merely better at some things than others, it is a matter of skill. It is a non-evaluative, objective distinction. Certain unchanging characteristics make us comparable to others, the basis for assessing differences in skill.

Attempt to get at essential elements of social life. Residues: constant through time; derivations: variable manifestations of these constants. Residues can be grouped into types, e.g. type I, instinct for combinations; type II, groups persistences. Circulation of elites involves rotation of leadership of type I and type II. Type I elites impel people to system making, large scale financial and political dealing, experiment, innovation, departure from the common. Type II skills are represented in those who are conservative, exhibit loyalty, class solidarity, patriotism. Masses kept in check primarily because they are mostly type II, submissive. Circulation of elites will swing from one style of leadership to another historically.

F) Questions:

1. How does the view of power as a product of human nature relate to the distribution of power in society?
2. What ideological positions are supported by these perspectives?
3. Can power arrangements be changed?
4. Can power be equalized?

G) Karl Marx (1818–1883)

Dual purpose: to achieve a better understanding of conditions of human social development and historical change; and with this understanding to accelerate the actual process by which history developed. At one and the same time a social theorist and a man of action (core notion of praxis - combining theory and action).

1. Human societies must be studied as whole systems, challenged notion of essentialism, reduction of pieces of society that could be cumulated to constitute the whole.
2. Society is inherently mutable, changing through contradiction and conflict. Observation of changes can produce a science of society.
3. Primacy of work in human life, distinguishing people from nature. Human produce and reproduce the means of their own subsistence, "In producing their means of subsistence, men [sic] indirectly produce their actual material life"... "The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends in the first place on what it is they need to reproduce. What exists must be replenished ... But there is also more. It is not simply the reproduction of physical existence that men engage in, but a definite form of activity, a way of expressing or living life."
4. Organization of work. Societies need to be understood in terms of the ways in which they organize work. Forces of production: raw materials of land, labor, resources, technology. Relations of production: ways in which forces are arranged, organized. The organization of work is a social process, result of interaction, distinguishing different forms of society, e.g. hunter gatherers, subsistence farming, surplus market economies. Mode of production: combination of economic base (forces and relations of production) with cultural institutions, forms of consciousness (family, law, politics) which legitimate and protect economic system.
5. Historical materialism. Optimistic history of progressive change through developments in the forces and relations of production (material conditions of society). Change occurs through contradictions (dialectic) within the mode of production. Any particular society is likely to show characteristics which can be associated with more than one mode of production (e.g. feudal or capitalist), but the features of one are likely to be dominant. History is succession of changes in the mode of production. One mode becomes unstable when the development of productive forces is such that established relations are no longer appropriate, workable, efficient. At some point, the material productive forces of a society - the means available to produce the wherewithal of life - come into conflict with the existing relations of production (ways in which property is organized, labor distributed etc.).

History is progressive because ability to produce continually increases. History is regressive because in perfecting the forces of production, humans create more and more complex and oppressive social organizations.

6. Classes and class struggle. All history is the history of class struggle; classes are the agent of historical change. Class - groups who share a particular relationship to the means of production, place within the relations of production. Struggle between classes is not monotonous conflict between rich and poor; the form, shape, nature of struggle varies throughout history. There has always been class struggle, but particular classes differed and thus nature of conflict qualitatively different.

7. Capitalism and wage labor. the struggle of modern factory worker is, for Marx, qualitatively different than all earlier struggles because of alienation of labor through wages, appropriation of surplus through profit. Variety forms of exploitation. contradictions of liberal law, formally free to sell labor or free to starve; treated as equals but live unequally; unpaid reproduction of labor .

8. Where do power differentials come from? How do arrangements of power change?

#### H) Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859)

Work characterized by tension between traditional and modern values. convinced of the irreversibility of trend toward democracy, was contemptuous of reactionaries who would block history. At the same time, obsessed by erosion of traditional context and values of aristocracy, localism, cultural variety, believed that European liberalism rested on these. Democracy in America; The Ancient Regime.

1. Democracy leads to bureaucracy. Paid functionaries replace donated public service by the rich. "Substitution of paid for unpaid functionaries is itself sufficient to constitute a real revolution".

2. Bureaucracy leads to concentrations of power. Division of and specialization of labor creates stratification between those who do and those who think until they are no longer interchangeable. This is true for manufactures, as it is also true for other functions including governance. The complexity of functions which distinguish the people and their capacities; it will erode the capacities of those required to do little and attract to the complex tasks, those more able, reinforcing and segregating them.

3. Paradox: democracy leads to concentrations of power; concentrations of power erode democracy.

#### I) Robert Michels (1876-1936)

Sociologist who studied problems of democracy, revolution, class conflict, trade unionism, mass society and nationalism with special emphasis on role of intellectuals and elites. Political Parties.

1. The Iron Law of Oligarchy. "It is organization which gives birth to the domination of the elected over the electors, of the mandatories over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization, says oligarchy."

2. Dissatisfied with psychology explanations for persistence of concentrations of power even within purportedly democratic organizations, focused upon constraints upon power sharing and democracy derived solely from organizational needs: need to make rapid decisions, difficulties of communication, growth and complexity of tasks, division of labor, development and need for fulltime activity. Leadership develops from knowledge, skill, time devoted.

3. Deviation of leaders from democratic norms not the result of desire, ambition, corruption, but the result of organizational impetus and needs. Leaders violate democratic norms by conforming to organizational norms of efficiency, effectiveness, communication.

#### J) Max Weber (1864-1920)

Offered a middle road between radical subjectivism which seemed to argue that all things rooted completely in individual desire to avoid pain and seek pleasure (utilitarianism), and anti-scientific historicists who argued that there are no common threads to social life, always different in different times and places. Sought to study culture and history through use of typologies and common concepts, developed language for comparison, building blocks for a social theory (description and explanation of social events and patterns).

1. Social action is that human behavior that takes into account the behavior of others and is "thereby oriented in its course". When we acknowledge and take account of others, we act socially - interactively. Concerned with how we attach meaning to our behavior, how we make sense of what we do, how we understand our own actions. Understanding is not an individual process, although it describes the behavior of individuals.

2. Modes of orientation to others, forms of social action. (a): instrumental rational (zweckrational): oriented toward achievement of goals; (b) value rational (wertrational), oriented to substantive values, entirely for own sake with reference to nothing else; (c) expressive action: emotive, states of feeling; (d) traditional action: habit, convention, long practice without referene to goals, values, feelings. These meanings are knowable, observable with time. Ideal types.

3. Group action, how people come together in groups: (a) Classes: groups based upon shared material interests, classes have common life chances represented by economic interests in possession of goods and opportunities for income, exist under commodity market; class position does not necessarily lead to class determined action but only if and when connections between causes and consequences of class position become transparent (cf. Marx, class of itself and class for itself). (b) Status groups based upon feelings of affinity, likeness, belief in what is honorable and proper, styles of life. Shared level of esteem often interacts with material abilities and interests. (c) Party, organization which seeks political power. Basis of power may vary depending upon social context and structural circumstances, empirical question. Power may be for enrichment but also for its own sake. "Class, Status and Party".

#### K) Michel Foucault (1926-1984)

Wrote histories of particular institutions (e.g. prisons, medicine,) to demonstrate how understanding of behavior and control of behavior connected. Pointed to rise of professions whose work it is to define and name behavior, rise of "scientific" knowledge connected with increasingly minute control of human behavior.

Wrote histories which demonstrated systematic movement from control of the body to the control of the mind, the inseparability of knowledge and power so that he would use the terms only in conjunction knowledge/power.

History of sexuality is a history of change from 17th openness about sexual practices, bodies, pleasure to increasing secretness, confinement and regulation of sexuality. This regulation takes place by making sex the subject of discourse - talk about sex which becomes the means of naming, interpreting, regulating, confining sex to the terms of that discourse. Sex becomes the province of the church and medicine. Sex becomes taken charge of by the professionals who exercise expert authority over this discourse.

Various strategies of the discourse: hysterization of women; teaching of children; socialization of procreation; concentration on desire as well as act, psychiatric monopoly of interpretation. Eventually center sexuality in/on the family. Psychoanalysis keeps sexuality within the family. Current openness represents tactical shift in uses of sexuality and challenge to family.

Histories demonstrate relationship between knowledge and power, classes and institutions, development of authorities who study and thereby name, define, and control behavior. Control over institutions produces knowledge, knowledge is power.

1. Power must be understood as the multiplicity of force relations, organized in interactions. Power is omnipresent; there is nothing outside power. It is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, in every relationship. It is the name one attributes to a complex strategic situation.

2. Power is not seized, acquired, or shared, something one holds or slips away;

3. Power is not exterior to other forms of interaction but within all interaction;

4. Power comes from below as well as above; there is no binary opposition; interactive (cf. Simmel), intersubjective (cf. Wrong), but the basis of cleavages that run through social relations;

5. Power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective; they are intelligible, knowable;
6. Where there is power there is resistance (cf. Simmel);
7. do not look for stable unchanging power structures, notice the shifting modifications, distributions, appropriations of power/knowledge; transformations;
8. Power formations become reinvented, replayed, reconditioned at macro levels and again in the specificities of local arrangements and interactions (state, family etc.);
9. Discourse is the intersection of thought and action; power and knowledge. We should not imagine a world of accepted discourses and rejected discourses but a play of multiple discourses seeking space and tactical/strategic advantage. The task of sociology is to construct the picture of what is said and done, and what is not said and not done.

## V. POWER INSTITUTIONALIZED

Thus far, we have discussed and elaborated the concept of power (what can be included or excluded; the relationships among influence, conformity and power) and theories attempting to explain the distribution of power in social settings. The preliminary definition offered, "Power is the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others" needs to be further elaborated to take account of power that is exercised by individuals from power which is institutionalized in groups, organizations, communities, and societies.

Here we will look at structured or institutionalized power. Sociologists often attempt to differentiate the relative influence of individuals (agency) versus structures in determining what happens in social life. For this class, I suggest that we think about agency and structure as a dialectical process or compromise between positions which suggest that (a) individuals create the world around them (individualism), and (b) social structures determine the characteristics and actions of individuals; here, individuals are only the bearers of social relations not the authors. Instead, I suggest we adopt the notion that the meanings given by individuals to their world become institutionalized or turned into social structures, and the structures then become part of the meaning-systems employed by individuals.

- A. What do we mean by the term structure?
  - a) any recurring pattern of social behavior
  - b) enduring patterned relationships

B. Consider the following illustrations of structure.

1) Notice the difference between the following statements:

"It occurs to me now that ... many of us who are privileged ... should make use of our security ... to make noise, to be courageous, to become unpopular."

"It occurs to me now that as we age many of us who are privileged - those with assured place and pattern in their lives, with some financial security - are in danger of choosing to stay right where we are, to undertake each day's routine and to listen to our arteries hardening ... Instead, we should make use of our security, our seniority to take risks, to make noise, to be courageous, to become unpopular."

Carolyn Heilbrun, "Writing A Woman's Life"

The ability or opportunity to make noise is affected by one's place in the social structure, that is, privilege is created by age, assured place, pattern to one's life, financial security. The opportunity and ability is not solely an individual production but a consequence of a pattern of social behavior.

2) The position and behavior of, as well as responses, to Xs and Os in the film, "Tale of Os is determined not by personal characteristics, desires, wants, or needs, but by a structural feature of the organization, i.e. the number of Xs and Os.

3) Consider the roles you played in the game, "Star Power". How was your position and your behavior affected by something in the organization of the game, i.e. the structure of the situation?

C. Steven Lukes, Power: A Radical View, offers one, two, and three dimensional views of power:

1) One dimensional view: the capacity of one actor to do something affecting another actor which changes the probably pattern of specified future events. (Not significantly different than Wrong's definition.)

2) Two dimensional view: Power is exercised whene A participated in the making of decisions that affect B. Power is also exercised when one person devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of action to issues of no importance to A, the power holder.

3) Three dimensional view: Power is also a consequence of collective forces and social arrangements. The bias of social systems, that is, the degree to which particular interests and persons are benefitted (are powerful) or disadvantaged (are powerless) is a consequence not only of individually chosen acts, but also of socially structured and culturally patterns behavior of groups, and practices of institutions.



D. Consider Anthony Giddens' discussion of power:

"Resources treated as structural elements of social systems (e.g. age, income, education, organizational position) are drawn upon by actors in the instantiation of interaction. The power relations sustained in the regularized practices constituting social systems can be considered as **reproduced relations of autonomy and dependence in interaction** (cf. Simmel). **Domination** refers to structured (patterned) asymmetries of resources drawn upon and reconstituted in such power relations. Domination ... is used in the sense of 'permitting dominion over', dominions concerning the sway actors have over others, and over the material world they inhabit.

E. Professional Authority: power institutionalized in the modern world. The rise of professional, expert, competent authority: the disenchantment of the world. A series of lectures on the rise of professional authority and restructuring of social power in modern society.

1. Analytic Models of Authority and Community

- Tonnies: **Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft**  
Nisbet: **demise of primary relationships  
replaced by functional relationships  
subjectivism, nihilism**  
Weber: **shift in modes of action from tradition and convention,  
expressive/affective action, substantive rational to  
functional, means-ends efficiency, technical rationality (zweck rational)**

2. An historical example of professional authority: family policies

3. Contemporary examples. Where does authority lie in the modern world? What forms of relationships and what forms of authority are legitimated, supported by public policy? The case of abortion; an example of guardianship for incompetent adults.

4. The role of technology as a foundation of authority. What accounts for the shift of authority from traditional to functional relationships? An account from the structure and interactions of everyday life.

- a. the taken for granted world
- b. protected by myths, stories, explanations, justifications, legitimations
- c. religion, the principal legitimation throughout recorded history
- d. threats to the taken for granted world
- e. shocks and crises used to take a long time to develop
- f. modernity, science, and technology have brought change in the speed of change and the organization of change; change is planned, funded, formally organized
- g. technology is changing material conditions, but more important changing the meaning of our very selves: conception of human life/self as a calculable, solvable problem just the same as material phenomenon
- h. daily interactions: increased in number, speed, variety, reduced duration
- i. consequences:
  - the notion that all things are possible, perfectibility
  - possible loss of control over the search for these possible and perfect circumstances
  - acknowledgement of change and diversity may lead to certification and reification of that diversity ... a shift from how things are to a sense that this is how they ought to be; normlessness/anomie ... absence of grounds for norms, standards, expectations.

F. Hegemony. Ability of professional power /authority to sustain itself may be considered an example of hegemony, a process of cultural domination.

1. Hegemony is a term sociologists employ to describe what happens when different cultures or subcultures come into contact. Cultures do not exist in isolation, moreover, societies often contain subgroups, that is several groups with distinctive symbolic forms, rituals, meaning systems. These cultural groups often compete with each other not only for material resources (e.g. land, space) but for status and prestige as well. Weber, Fallows, Peller have been describing competition between groups which is not only about material well being but about symbolic meanings as well. The process by which cultural norms of one group becomes imposed on others is often called hegemony. One might refer to the rise of professional authority as professional hegemony. Here hegemony refers to the way in which one group establishes and maintains its power, dominating other social groups.

2. The term is associated with Antonio Gramsci, who described the hegemony of a dominant class as something created and recreated in a web of institutions, social relations and ideas. He suggested that hegemonic processes were located in civil society but nonetheless provided the underpinnings of state power. State domination, he claimed, could only be achieved through the consent of the dominated classes. This consent is achieved through collaboration with institutions of civil society, family, religion, literature. Culture, or the private realm, helps support public power.

Gramsci talked about the dual consciousness of dominated classes, just as W.E. Dubois talked about double consciousness in The Souls of Black Folk. That is, dominated classes sustain two belief systems, their own and that of the dominating class, which are often inconsistent. This results in a mindset and consciousness which is confused and contradictory, what is valid in one sphere is invalid in another.

3. Eugene Genovese describes hegemony as the ability of a particular class to contain those antagonisms, those contradictions on a terrain or sphere in which its legitimacy is not dangerously questioned. He talks about role of law in slave society and its ability to sustain slavery while providing a forum for apparently challenging slavery; the role of law today is similar providing rights consciousness (grounds of appeal away from politics toward something above or beyond politics) while sustaining view of law as corrupt and fair at same time.

4. Hegemony refers to ways in which sets of symbols are made illegitimate or legitimate, the ways in which ruling classes present themselves as the guardian of interests and sentiments of those being ruled. Hegemony and domination rest upon recognition of complicity of the subordinate classes in the process of domination and the role of culture in creating this complicit or consent.

G. Fallows provides critique of professional ideology as sapping the strength of American society; fostering complacency and mediocrity. Professionalism represents stability, security, conformity rather than risk taking, adventure, innovation. Professionalism claims meritocracy on basis of specialized knowledge, technique and training. Nonetheless builds structures of protection for mediocre, well born, the conventional.

H. Peller critiques scholarly claims to apolitical, dispassionate knowledge. Demonstrates that what passes as knowledge is set of choices and value judgements cloaked in particular language. That language decries its enemies as the mob, as political, as biased, as prejudiced, but nonetheless reveals in its own "scholarly" work bias, prejudice, value, political choice.