

## **PRELIMINARIES**

### **I – ORGANISATION**

#### **Modern Bureaucracy**

In his introduction to his *Attitudes Towards History*, Kenneth Burke recounts an anecdote, which he attributes to Lincoln Steffens. Here it is:

Steffens, so the story goes, was entering the New York Public Library when a friend of his came stumbling out. The man was obviously in great agitation. "I've found it!", he shouted. And he clamorously called for Steffens to go with him and listen while he told of his discovery.

Steffens obliged. The two bumped along Forty-Second Street and turned down Fifth Avenue while the friend somewhat incoherently explained.

Gradually, despite his excitement, his words began to make sense - and Steffens realised that his friend had found a plan for saving the world. And the more the outlines of the plan began to emerge, the better the scheme sounded.

Then Steffens became aware that someone was walking along beside them, listening to the account. And finally, turning, he saw a very distinguished-looking gentleman - then, looking again, he realised that it was the devil.

Steffens: "You seem to be interested in my friend's plan."

The Devil: "Decidedly!"

Steffens: "What do you think of it?"

The Devil: "I think it's an excellent plan."

Steffens: "You mean to say you think it would work?"

The Devil: "Oh yes. It would certainly work."

Steffens: "But in that case, how about you? Wouldn't it put you out of a job?"

The Devil: "Not in the least. I'll organise it."<sup>1</sup>

There are two responses - pay-offs - to the story, not just one, which is why I have chosen to start with it. For the point lies in the conjunction of the two.

In the first, we confront the notion of the separation of ends and means. Implicit in the story is the assumption that the act of organising is entirely distinct from what the plan to reform the world is about; it is presented as a separate job, which the Devil can take as his.

The second kind of response to the anecdote is rather more complicated. It presents organisation as the path by which even the most admirable of intentions - 'saving the world', no less - can end up as the work of the devil. The failure of all attempts to realise 'the good life' in political, economic, social or any other terms, so the implication runs, is rooted in the institutional structures of organised relationships which people in the modern world have contrived so as to achieve their best purposes.

The devil's concluding remark reveals the implicit message and so delivers the punch line to the whole story. It derives its impact from the mixture of fear and suspicion which the idea of organisation is taken as bound to arouse - and which the recounting of the anecdote itself demonstrates. Any number of other examples of the same predictable reaction could be cited. In the first half of this century, novels like *Brave New World* and films like *Metropolis* made deliberate use of it; more significant still, perhaps, is the curiously pervasive and persistent reading of Kafka's *The Castle* and *The Trial* as portraying the individual in the modern world as totally immured in a nightmarish bureaucracy. And George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, published in 1949, did the same service for the second half of the century.

One even finds much the same apocalyptic view expressed by the great analyst (and justifier) of bureaucratic organisation, Max Weber, no less than by Freud and Marcuse: "It is as if we were deliberately to become men who need order and nothing but order, who become nervous and cowardly if for one moment the order wavers, and helpless if they are torn away from their total incorporation in it. That the world should know no men but these! It is in such an evolution that we are already caught up, and the great question is therefore not how we can promote and hasten it, but what we can oppose to this machinery in order to keep a portion of mankind free from this parcelling-out of the soul, from this supreme mastery of the bureaucratic way of life."<sup>2</sup>

This is very odd. Weber's pronouncements on modern bureaucracy show that he regarded it as essential to the maintenance of civilised life, representing something of the supremacy of human reason over circumstances which created modern science, and characteristic of the kind of achievement which we chiefly applaud in ourselves and others. Yet he himself, like so many social and political commentators and students after

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<sup>1</sup> K.Burke, *Attitudes Towards History*, Hermes Publ., 1959, p.xiv.

<sup>2</sup> M.Weber, quoted in J.P.Mayer, *Max Weber and German Politics*, Faber, 1956, pp.127-8.

him, also saw it as inhuman, malignant, oppressive, an external force threatening what is best in us, our most cherished values.

The dominance of bureaucratic organisation has long been acknowledged fact.<sup>3</sup> It is not too easy to find something on which historians and social scientists are agreed, but a fair consensus has existed for some time on what constitutes the central and distinguishing fact about contemporary society; namely, that it is a society of organisations. "Today," says Sheldon Wolin towards the end of his influential historical survey of political ideas, "the individual moves in a world dominated by large and complex organisations."<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Boulding takes this as self-evident, and goes on in his first chapter to sketch the extraordinary rapidity with which different forms of activity - from manufacturing industry to farming, from war to education, from government to entertainment - have become contained within organisations administered and controlled by managers and officials.<sup>5</sup> F.H.Hinsley, in the introduction to the volume of *The New Cambridge Modern History* dealing with the last quarter of the nineteenth century, remarks on the same formidable and rapid growth of organisations, mostly bureaucratic in form, as the dominant pattern of national development in industrial societies: "Like the movement towards greater material output and like the advance in technology and production methods, processes with which it is intimately connected, the drift towards greater organisation among men, as specialised groups and total communities, has continually increased throughout modern times. But it was in the generation after 1870, when the drift was so much accelerated by the interaction of the greater problems and the greater opportunities with which societies were confronted, that those forms and attitudes took the clear shape which exists today."<sup>6</sup>

The broad picture to which Wolin, Boulding and Hinsley point has been amplified, parcelled out and examined in detail, and the consequences for individual lives and for the social order discussed in thousands of published writings, and it is no part of the present purpose to challenge its truth. Even so, their pronouncements stand in need of one sizeable qualification. It is not that organisations, or the human propensity to organise for collective action of all kinds, began suddenly to proliferate in all kinds of contexts during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Rather, a particular form of organisation, commonly spoken of as 'bureaucratic', began to overlay or replace other forms of organisation where they existed, and to be applied to more and more sorts of transactions and activities. It was hierarchic in structure, followed a model of growing familiarity in government offices and in armies from the time of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in government offices and in armies, which offered the prospect of being able to utilise hitherto unprecedented accumulations of economic, political or social resources for the acquisition of profit, power or influence.

Yet it was not even the apparent universality of bureaucracy that gave the industrial societies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the sense of inescapable

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<sup>3</sup> H.D.Jacoby's *The Bureaucratization of the World*, Univ. of California Pr., 1973, gives a synoptic view.

<sup>4</sup> S.S.Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, Allen & Unwin, 1960, p.354.

<sup>5</sup> K.Boulding, *The Organizational Revolution*, Harper, 1953.

<sup>6</sup> F.H.Hinsley, "Introduction", *New Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. XX, C.U.P., 1962, p. 32.

oppressiveness it seems to have acquired. It was rather a set of beliefs, widely accepted even before Weber put his imprimatur on it, of bureaucracy being the optimal form of organisation. They were beliefs which incorporated acceptance of bureaucracy as logical and necessary. There were, it seemed, no options. The only model of effective organisation we had - were stuck with - was the bureaucratic system.

That this was so was taken for granted in almost all of the continuing discussion about the situation of modern society. Again, the tone was set by Weber. His analysis of organisational forms located the development of bureaucracy in the same causal framework as that of science; the character of organisation in the modern world was formed by one paramount trait in western man which has found increasing expression since its 'release' by the Reformation: rationality.

Science led the way. An invisible college of natural philosophers extending over most of western and central Europe had, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, accumulated ample evidence to demonstrate how certain principles, especially when they could be expressed in mathematical (and therefore incontrovertible) form, were applicable to the world of nature and so serve to replace its contingency and uncertainty by regularities and predictable causal paths. After Galileo, Descartes, Newton and Leibniz, nothing in the heavens or on earth seemed exempt from such principles. And if the apparent disorderliness of nature could be overcome by "true reason", so, said Locke, could it penetrate and rectify "the disorders, which succession of time had insensibly, as well as inevitably, introduced into the affairs of mankind."<sup>7</sup>

By identifying rationality as its guiding principle, Weber located the development of bureaucracy in the same causal framework as that of science. The character of organisation in the modern world was formed by this one paramount trait of rationality, which found increasing expression in the affairs of men since its 'release' during the seventeenth century. If rationality, with John Locke as its prophet, governed the ethos integrating the whole modernisation movement, bureaucracy became the chosen instrument of political and industrial modernisation, with Max Weber its natural historian. Bureaucracy, he claimed, has come to dominate the world not just because it has become accepted as the means of exercising power over, and through, massive human resources but because it is "always from a formal technical point of view the most rational type. For the needs of mass administration today, it is completely indispensable. The choice is only that between bureaucracy and dilettantism."<sup>8</sup>

Weber's generalised description ('ideal type') of modern bureaucracy is set out in this, his major work. In summary, its distinctive characteristics are:

- (i) The organisation operates according to a body of laws or rules, which are consistent and have normally been intentionally established.

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<sup>7</sup> J.Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, C.U.P., 1963, ii, p.158.

<sup>8</sup> M.Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1964, (trans. *Economy and Society*, Bedminster Pr., 1968, p.223.)

(ii) Every official is subject to an impersonal order by which he guides his actions. In turn, his instructions have authority only in so far as they conform with this generally understood body of rules; obedience is due to his office, not to him as an individual.

(iii) Each incumbent of an office has a specified sphere of competence, with obligations, authority, and powers to compel obedience strictly defined.

(iv) The organisation of offices follows the principle of hierarchy; that is, each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one.

(v) The supreme head of the organisation, and only he, occupies his position by appropriation, election, or by being designated as successor.

(vi) Other offices are filled, in principle, by free selection, and candidates are selected on the basis of 'technical' qualification. They are appointed, not elected.

(vii) The system also serves as a career ladder. There is promotion according to seniority or achievement. Promotion is dependent on the judgement of superiors.

(vii) The official, who in principle is excluded from any ownership rights in the concern, or his position, is subject to discipline and control in the conduct of his office.

Uncompromisingly as Weber argues the case for modern bureaucracy as the most technically rational form of organisation, he also sees the fundamental relationship it is built out of as command. In fact, he takes this as his starting point. Organised collective action of any kind depends on the assurance that specific commands uttered by the individual will be obeyed by his subordinates - in other words, that one person is in a position to have those subject to his command to do what he wants done regardless of their wishes or inclinations. Organised collective action, that is, requires a "closed or limited social relationship in which regulations are enforced by specific individuals, e.g., a chief and possibly an administrative staff."<sup>9</sup> A little later on, Weber clinches the point: "Whether or not an organisation exists is entirely a matter of the presence of a person in authority, either with or without an administrative staff."

In a bureaucracy, obedience is sustained by discipline. For Weber, bureaucracy is discipline's "most rational" offspring. And it is "the large-scale economic organisation" which is the great exemplar of organisational discipline legitimated by reason. Even so, he goes on, all discipline derives ultimately from military discipline.

Weber's remarks on discipline are to be found in the section of *Economy and Society* which was written just before the first World War, when scientific management (and the Pinkertons) were making the American factory the wonder of the world (with Lenin as

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<sup>9</sup> M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, p.48.

well as Weber and Marshall among those who were enthralled by the spectacle). This passage is from the concluding paragraph:

"No special proof is necessary to show that military discipline is the ideal model for the modern capitalist factory, as it was for the ancient plantation. However, organisational discipline in the factory has a completely rational basis. With the help of suitable methods of measurement, the optimum profitability of the individual worker is calculated like that of any material means of production. On this basis, the American system of 'scientific management' triumphantly proceeds with its rational conditioning and training of work performances, thus drawing the ultimate conclusion from the mechanisation and discipline of the plant. The psycho-physical apparatus of man is completely adjusted to the demands of the outer world, the tools, the machines - in short, it is functionalised, and the individual is shorn of his natural rhythm as determined by his organism; in line with the demands of the work procedure, he is attuned to a new rhythm through the functional specialisation of muscles and through the creation of an optimal economy of physical effort."<sup>10</sup>

The military link is no surprise. Weber's modern bureaucracy dates not so much from the reign of Frederick the Great (which is where German writers prefer to locate it) as from Napoleon's time, when French armies were giving the rulers of France the ability to exert their will over almost the whole of continental Europe west of Russia and the Ottoman Empire. And it was in fact the principles of army structure that were imported into the new administrative system of Napoleon's empire: a hierarchic structure of power and authority, which also served as the main channel by which information was communicated, and within which promotion was by merit - as defined by superiors.

While the connection between the part played by discipline in both military and bureaucratic organisation has become, if anything, clearer and more positive since Weber wrote those lines, the causal path that he saw may well have been reversed. After underlining the special congruence that now exists between "the technology of civil and military life", John Keegan points to the "pre-conditioning for battle" that modern industrial society conveys to its members: "Modern industry, moreover, teaches its work people - though the same lessons are learnt by almost all citizens, first in school and later as the administrators of the state's bureaucracy - habits of order, obedience and uniform behaviour."<sup>11</sup>

The word 'bureaucracy' was in fact invented in France during the eighteenth century as an opprobrious term for rule by officials. By the twentieth century it had come to be used interchangeably, as we have seen, with 'organisation', and one finds the word 'bureaucracy' used by historians as a generic term for all kinds of administrative system.

Weber did not deny the name of bureaucracy to other, earlier, forms of administration, but it was what he called 'modern bureaucracy' - the bureaucratic structure characteristic

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<sup>10</sup> M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, p.1156.

<sup>11</sup> J. Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, Penguin Books, 1978, pp.324-5.

of modern business and non-business (including governmental) administrative systems - that he took to be closest to his 'ideal type' of bureaucracy.

Modern bureaucracy, much as Weber described and analysed it, swept the board, so far as large-scale industrial and commercial firms were concerned, during his lifetime. This was true not only for Germany but for Western Europe in general and for the United States.

### **Managerialism**

There have also been changes. A study published in the early 1930's<sup>12</sup> showed that in half the 200 or so largest business firms in the United States (which together possessed half the country's wealth, outside of banks), the shareholders (i.e., those who actually owned the firms) had ceased to play any significant part in decision-making. Power had passed to the board of directors, which had, for all practical purposes, taken to coopting its members from its immediate subordinates and from outside the firm.

It was a departure from the still accepted norm which did not receive much public recognition until the last decades of the twentieth century, when two further developments which are fairly obvious consequences began to attract the attention of journalists and others. J.K. Galbraith has given these new features more attention than most:

"[T]he modern corporation is assumed to require of its management that profit maximization be for others, for stockholders who are both powerless and unknown. In fact, and often spectacularly in recent times, profit maximization has come to be for those with the power of decision. Management pay, bonuses and perquisites, golden parachutes in case of losing a takeover struggle, are set by management for itself...

"With the passage of plenary authority to management, the latter rewards itself not only with income but also with prestige. That, as well as the justification for managerial pecuniary return, is notably enhanced by corporate size. Size, accordingly, becomes for those in authority an important goal, along with return. From these new needs and motivations have come the modern conglomerates and the supporting takeover movement. These are not thought by any but exceptionally disciplined observers to improve efficiency, as traditional theory would hold. Rather, such mergers and combinations, in contrast with old-fashioned growth, are a much abbreviated route to the power, prestige - and also compensation - that go with greater size."<sup>13</sup>

There are other ways in which the legal rationality of Weber's modern bureaucracy has lost some of its rigour. Prominent among them has been, first, the shedding of a number of activities and functions which used to be thought of as integral to governmental or

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<sup>12</sup> A.A.Berle and G.C.Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, Macmillan, 1934.

<sup>13</sup> J.K.Galbraith, *A History of Economics*, Hamish Hamilton, 1987, pp.277-8. See also his *New Industrial State*, Hamish Hamilton, 1967.

business organisations to outside and independent 'service' organisations which perform them under contract. Secondly, government itself (especially in Britain) has created organisations which are also independent but operate under licence, so to speak, of the branch of government which set them up. These are now known as 'quangos': quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations. In both cases, power has passed from constitutional authority to an organisation or group not entirely, and sometimes hardly at all, subject to the control of a governmental bureaucracy.

Quite apart from these changes, which have been widely discussed and are now accepted as common knowledge, one other factor has emerged to alter the image we now have of bureaucracy - although the alteration has not so far had much effect on the popular view of the organisation of government, or business, or of anything else. From the 1930's on, organisations - industrial, business, governmental and other - became the object of a great deal of study from social scientists in Europe and America. Most of these organisations were relatively small, but nevertheless they reveal an extensive array of systems of organisation which diverge, sometimes a great deal, from the model of bureaucracy still accepted as the norm. They were not, to all appearances, the product of any conscious reaching for novelty or singularity, but rather the result of ad hoc contrivance, 'common-sense' adjustment, personal experience.<sup>14</sup>

What it all adds up to is that while there remain very considerable areas of organised activity which are clearly bureaucratic (local government is probably the most familiar), organisation in general is now seen as accommodating a rather wider range of structural arrangements and functioning processes than was thought to be the case at the beginning of the twentieth century.

### **Cui Bono**

Of course, the evident and intimate connection between organisation and power manifests itself in other ways than in the command hierarchy of Weberian bureaucracy and its later derivatives. There is for example Hannah Arendt's pronouncement that power "corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert."<sup>15</sup> Power, that is, belongs with the members of a group of -people - or of a society - when they act together out of an understanding they have in common to attain objectives they have in common.

Admittedly, the idea that (political) power has to be thought of as derived from social, or communal, sources is not much of an advance on what, some two hundred years ago, seemed pretty obvious to Hume: namely, that power in society belonged with the governed rather than with any government, simply because there were so many more of them. As it stands, moreover, the sentence quoted from Arendt bypasses the problem of how it is that when people "act in concert" it is usually at the behest or in support of those who are deemed powerful simply because of popular support.

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<sup>14</sup> See Tom Burns and G.M. Stalker, *The Management of Innovation*, (3rd. Edition) O.U.P., 1994.

<sup>15</sup> H.Arendt, *On Violence*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970, p. 44.

Two or three years after Arendt's book appeared, one finds Kenneth Arrow providing a revised version of the same observation (which, he adds, is so much a truism that it is more taken for granted than asserted):

"Collective action is a means of power, a means by which individuals can more fully realise their individual values."<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Arrow's proposition also turns out to have the same sort of question buried inside it: 'cui bono?'. Who in practice are those individuals whose values 'are more fully realised' by organised collective action? Is it all those who make up the collectivity, or the majority of them, or a few, or just one?

This is nowadays taken to be no simple question to answer. Indeed, in the form: 'Who gets what?' favoured by political scientists, the question is supposed by some to be what politics is all about. So it is worth remembering that for most of recorded history the answer to the question 'Who benefits?' was so obvious as to make it not worth asking. Rationality didn't enter into it. With very few exceptions, those with power or authority over the resources represented by organised collective action saw to it that they themselves benefited more than others, sometimes to the exclusion of others. The question then reverts to one of how it is that organisations which allocate the benefits arising from their activities so unequally manage to sustain themselves. And again for most of recorded history, the chosen instrument has been physical coercion by violence, the threat of violence, or the fear of it.

It seems hardly possible that anyone, even academic writers, living in the twentieth century could overlook the role of violence in human affairs. Yet there is a marked tendency to treat organisations founded on violence as essentially impermanent, as with Rousseau, and violence as a mark of the breakdown of organisation, an aberration, as with Locke. Hume's observation that government must rest on 'opinion' or 'interest' - on the acquiescence of the governed or on the support of a sufficient number who see their own interests best served by the existing system of rule has been echoed time and again during the present century. (Although Hume, not surprisingly, covered himself, having it both ways: 'Even the most despotic of rulers have to rely on the loyalty of their 'mamalukes' or 'praetorian guards'<sup>17</sup>)

Obedience to government, it is commonly held, is a matter of authority. And authority rests on religious belief, shared goals and values, a constellation of interests common to all, or trust in the 'rule of law' and the superior wisdom and competence of those in government. Thus MacIver: "Without authority force is destructive violence, spasmodic, undirected, futile. Authority is responsive to the underlying social structure. The force of government is but an instrument of authority, vindicating the demands of an order that force alone never creates."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> K.J.Arrow, *The Limits of Organisation*, Norton, 1974, p.18.

<sup>17</sup> D.Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, Essay 4.

<sup>18</sup>R.M.MacIver, *The Web of Government*, Macmillan, 1947, p.16.

There is of course another tradition of thought, usually regarded as dating from Machiavelli and kept alive by modern social scientists like Radcliffe-Brown and C. Wright Mills, which sees the use of violence as essential not only to maintain 'law and order' and to counter threats from external powers but to the existence of the state itself.

In this they are echoing Weber, for whom the definition of the state resided in the monopoly of violence it claimed within a specific territory: "Ultimately, one can define the modern state sociologically only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it, as to every political association, namely, the use of physical force: 'Every state is founded on force', said Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk. That is in fact correct. If there existed only social structures for which violence were unknown as a means, then would the concept 'state' be eliminated, and what would emerge would be designated as 'anarchy', in this special sense of the word. ... Naturally, violence is not the normal or the only means of the state - that goes without saying - but it is a means specific to it. Today the relation between the state and violence is especially intimate."<sup>19</sup> The intimacy of the relation - becomes spectacularly apparent when the state loses its monopoly of violence, as it did in two outstanding cases - the French and the Russian Revolutions. Both revolutions owed their success in no small measure to the breakdown of the relation between the established state and the military forces it had up to then had available.

Weber, in other words, treats violence as an extension of administrative authority by other means. It was Reinhard Bendix who caught on to this aspect of Weber's account of power; it is indeed remarkably like Clausewitz's definition of war.<sup>20</sup> E.V. Walter, who noted Bendix' observation, himself makes a distinction between two major categories of systems of terror:<sup>21</sup> one, a 'siege of terror', in which a 'terror staff' is recruited either to overthrow a government or, where this is impossible, implement a strategy of destabilising the authority system, or simply repudiating it and remaining independent. The twentieth century affords a sufficiency of instances, ranging from the P.L.O. to the Red Brigade. The other category is the 'reign of terror', of the kind publicly instituted during one phase of the French Revolution, and which was used more extensively by the German authorities in the occupied territories during the Second World War; it remains nowadays as a familiar element in South American and South-East Asian regimes.

Less attention has been given to a third category, namely polities in which rulers regarded violence not as a last resort nor as a threat to reinforce command, but as a normal means of control, although Weber, just after the passage quoted above, makes passing mention of it: in the past, he says, "physical violence was an altogether normal means" whereby political enterprises were organised. The same proposition forms the opening text of W.H. McNeill's Pursuit of Power: "Prior to A.D.1000, the preponderance of command systems for mobilising human and material resources for large-scale enterprises was never in doubt. Wars were fought and taxes were collected by command. Public works

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<sup>19</sup>M.Weber, "Politik als Beruf" in Ges. Politische Schriften, Tuebingen, 1958, p.494.

<sup>20</sup> R.Bendix, Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1962, p.290, n.11.

<sup>21</sup> E.V.Walter, Terror and Resistance, O.U.P., 1969, p.7.

were built by command. Settlement of border regions was carried through by command."<sup>22</sup>

Commands, in this context, were obeyed because those who issued them had force at their disposal, staffs who could coerce, compelling people to do things against their will, and who could, and frequently did, destroy by violence. Collective action was, more often than not, organised by men with swords in their hands, men to whom -violence 'came naturally', and was the obvious, the normal, means of control.<sup>23</sup>

We have now arrived at a distinction between two sorts of referent of the word 'organisation,' a distinction which rests on the difference between the concrete and the abstract meaning, but goes beyond it. The difference has been remarked upon more than once, without much being made of it. Sartre, for example, noted that, "The word 'organisation' refers both to the internal action by which a group defines its structure and to the group itself as structured activity in the practical field. People say both: 'we have failed because the organisation (the distribution of tasks) left a lot to be desired', and, 'our organisation has decided that... etc.' This ambiguity is important"<sup>24</sup>

The ambiguity is indeed important, although Sartre in fact went on to treat it as a nuisance, a hazard one must be wary of. I want to treat the two - organisation as an activity and organisation as a structure - as quite separate ideas, and to exploit the difference. At one level, the distinction is one which ordinary usage disentangles fairly easily: 'organisations' clearly refers to organisational structures - artefacts arrived at by the deliberate arrangement and coordination of activities so as to achieve certain prescribed ends. When it comes to 'organisation' ("the internal action by which a group defines its structure"), we are not concerned with a population of separate organisations but with organisation itself and in general - with the fact that people organise themselves, and with the fact that they go about doing so in very different ways.

The idea also exists of organisations which are brought into existence certainly by actual human agents but without owing their present structure and procedures wholly to deliberate or conscious design. The modern state, for example, is the creature of a lengthy and complex series of actions. Each of them may well have been conscious and deliberate, but the eventual outcome is properly to be regarded as often, or in large part, their unintended consequence. At the same time, it is seen as an amalgam of a host of smaller organisations, many of them component parts of the state, others subsidiary to it, more still which regard themselves as almost, virtually - but never quite - independent of it. All the same, we tend to regard the state as the single, centrally administered, organisation of 'the government' (which Laski thought was synonymous with it, and the more comprehensible and appropriate term). Moreover, before the eighteenth century, when constitutions were for the most part unwritten, while the way in which the state was constituted (sc. 'organised') was not necessarily regarded as divinely ordained, something

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<sup>22</sup> W.H.McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power*, Blackwell, 1983, pp.21-2.

<sup>23</sup> M.Kean, *History of Medieval Europe*, Penguin, 1969, p.24.

<sup>24</sup> J-P.Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, (trans. A.Sheridan Smith) N.L.Books, 1976, p. 446.

of sanctity attached to what Burke called 'the antient principles and rules of life' which infused the proper ordering and conduct of its affairs and even to the legislation or act of conquest on which it might have been founded. Perhaps some people still regard the British constitution, which remains unwritten, in the same way.

So, while 'the state' is recognisable, and recognised, as an organisation, it is certainly not thought of in itself as a bureaucracy, however much use it makes of bureaucracy. Nor is 'the economy.' Commerce at all levels, and the production and sale of foodstuffs and other commodities, were certainly organised long before anyone thought of economic planning, or even economics. Once again, God's own hand was seen at work by Edmund Burke, when he wrote, not so much in the spirit of a disciple of Adam Smith, perhaps, as that of a prophet of the Adam Smith Society, of the 'laws of commerce, which are the laws of nations and therefore the laws of God.' Nowadays, many people (though perhaps not a sufficiency of them) believe that the principles according to which 'the economic system', as we call it, has been and now is organised have to be discovered, if at all, by empirical investigation.

Organisation at this comprehensive level involves each and every member of a society. It emerges and is sustained in order to provide goods and services and to exchange them. Organisation at this level manifests itself as a body of rules, creating or affecting rights and duties, entitlements and obligations. However, while some of these rules are mandatory and have the force of law - i.e., can be created, cancelled, or changed by deliberate act, others derive their force from what H.L.A.Hart calls 'tradition': such rules "acquire and lose the status of traditions by growing, being practised, ceasing to be practised, and decaying."<sup>25</sup>

There is also a second level of ambiguity concealed within the ambiguity that Sartre noted, and this leads into more complicated issues. Besides the idea of organisation as a man-made instrument, composed of different parts and materials and created to serve a specific purpose, the word is also commonly applied to the inner structure of plants and animals ('organisms'). Furthermore, perhaps with this biological reference in mind, the word is also applied to the idea of an arrangement of individual parts or units into a systematic whole without explicit reference to intention or purpose or, indeed, to conscious human agency.

This notion of generalised, impersonal, organisation appears in a number of contexts, and at a number of different levels of comprehensiveness. At the extreme, there are ideas of very general organising principles at work in human affairs throughout human history, or during substantial or critical periods of it, which carry the suggestion that some implicit, unconscious, non-human, perhaps supra-human, process is at work to create and sustain an ordered state of affairs, an equilibrium achieved independently of human design. 'The hand of God' and 'the wheel of fortune' were the best known of these in the past. These have been replaced largely (though by no means wholly) by the idea of powers or forces which are, though secular or even worldly, equally supra-human and unchallengeable.

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<sup>25</sup> H.L.A.Hart, *The Concept of Law*, O.U.P., 1961, p.172.

The social darwinists' 'survival of the fittest,' even though we now recognise it as the empty tautology it is, served its turn as a useful rationale for the imperialist scramble of the late nineteenth century. The materialist interpretation of history, put forward as a 'grand theory' to do for human history what Darwin's own theory of evolution had done for the world of nature, proved a good deal more tenacious, much of it being openly or surreptitiously incorporated into orthodox historical interpretations, but it has shed the inevitability which was its chief attraction for marxists.

'Grand theories' like social darwinism and the materialist interpretation of history have often turned out to be ideologies, mental devices with which people can organise their perception of the world which surrounds, and besets, them to their own satisfaction. But there is also a sense in which latterday variants on the notion of there being some suprahuman organising principle in control of human destiny reflect something of the same conception of the 'hand of God' being at work. Perhaps the most obvious, as it is the longest surviving, of these is 'the hidden hand,' the term by which generations of economists and politicians have supposed Adam Smith to refer to the operations of some secret law ruling human affairs so as to render the pursuit of self-interest by everybody into an instrument of unmatched efficiency in economic affairs. In other words, the transactions carried through by self-interested individuals in a society with division of labour and a market economy would lead - in the long run, but inexorably - to the benefit of all and the ultimate harmony of interests.

Short of such all-embracing visions of the way human affairs are organised by divine authority or supra-human forces (and are therefore, not at all incidentally, unchallengeable), the idea exists of more limited and special organisations being brought into existence certainly by actual human agents but without owing their present structure and procedures wholly to deliberate or conscious design.

When we come to the 'host of smaller organisations' which go to make up the 'state,' the 'economy' and 'civil society,' we shift consideration beyond the kind of ambiguity which attaches to the idea of organisation. 'Organisations' are commonly understood to have an institutional character and to be fairly durable. But 'organisation' as an activity may refer to a short episode of activity engaging a number of people in different ways, as in the case of an emergency, a rescue operation, preparing the setting for a social occasion or ceremony, a contest, or a game. Both meanings comply with Talcott Parson's definition: 'a system of cooperative relationships;' both call upon differential contributions to a collective effort; and both rely on commitment to collective effort and joint purpose. But whereas all these factors tend to be predictable, planned, negotiated, and contracted for in the case of the more formally constituted and more enduring organisations which people the state and the economy, there is, in the case of short-term, informal, or local organisations, a seemingly much more elastic and all-purpose character about the level of competence and degree of effort required, although not about obligation and commitment.

It was this capacity that Tocqueville found so strikingly displayed everywhere he went in America, where he found, quite apart from commercial and manufacturing organisations,

"associations of a thousand kinds, religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restrictive, enormous or diminutive."<sup>26</sup> About the same time, other foreign observers were struck by a similar phenomenon in England, though their comments were rather more sour. The 'Communist Manifesto' includes a sideswipe at the "economists, philanthropists, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole and corner reformers of every imaginable kind."<sup>27</sup> Herzen, a few years later, was just as -dismissive: "England teems with hundreds of associations ... solemn meetings take place which peers of the realm, clergymen and secretaries,ceremoniously attend: treasurers collect funds, journalists write articles, all are busily engaged in doing nothing at all."<sup>28</sup> Marx wrote it all off as 'bourgeois socialism', a ludicrous show masking a total incapacity to comprehend the march of modern history. Herzen saw it as a form of amusement for the upper classes, "a sop to the troubled conscience to these somewhat worldly Christians." "What gave the game away to the exiles," a recent commentator has written, "was the presence of clergymen at ostensibly political meetings. Their experience in Europe had taught them what might be expected from churches and priests. But in England not even the workers knew enough to be anti-clerical."<sup>29</sup> Tocqueville was more acute and insightful. Although inclined at first, he says, to regard organisations like the temperance movement as a joke, he came to see this capacity for association as "a new science."

It is nowadays perhaps more appropriate and useful to regard the capacity, following Arthur Stinchcombe, as an aptitude for the social technology of organisation, rather than a science.<sup>30</sup> At any one time, obviously enough, organisations are brought into being in the light of a fund of experiential knowledge and technical competences which can be relied on as currently familiar or unexceptionable. It is a fund which tends to grow and can at times be enlarged dramatically, in much the same way as the more familiar growth of material technology.<sup>31</sup> (In much the same way, too, the skills and usages of social technology can be lost, forgotten or become obsolete.)

By 'social technology of organisation' in general is meant the special skills and knowledge concerning the conduct of government administration, of legal affairs, of business transactions, of industrial production and professional and other services, and of organisation for political purposes. Much of this body of skills and knowledge is not special to organised collective action. The population of a society which is literate and numerate can sustain more organisations, larger organisations, and more complex organisations than is possible in a society in which such accomplishments are absent or rare. What is more, as Stinchcombe pointed out, the extent to which people are prepared to resort to organised collective action depends very much on political stability, the availability of resources, the effectiveness of the legal system and of the machinery for

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<sup>26</sup>A.de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Vol.II, Book I, ch.v. (Vintage Books edn.,1954, p.114)

<sup>27</sup> Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Vol. I, Moscow, p.60.

<sup>28</sup> A.Herzen.....

<sup>29</sup> M.Richter, The Politics of Conscience: T.H.Green and his Age, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1964, p.300.

<sup>30</sup>A.L.Stinchcombe, "Social Structure and Organizations", in J.G.March, (ed.), Handbook of Organizations, Rand McNally, 1965.

<sup>31</sup>\*See the table composed by Stinchcombe in March's Handbook of Organizations, p.158.

maintaining order, the level of education, and the like. These could be regarded as external - circumstantial - factors.

There are also 'internal' factors. The first and most important of all seems to have been the invention of money; the replacement of the collection of a fraction of agricultural produce by taxes paid in coin was an immense facilitator for government. It had just as clear an effect on trade and commerce (and, eventually, on the employment of labour). The much later invention of the bill of exchange and of credit facilities acted as a kind of multiplier. Before industrialisation, the social technology of organisation comprehended a multiplicity of skills and competence, like practical, experiential knowledge about the division of labour and keeping accounts, but also awareness of when and where to make use of personal trust, loyalty, patronage, and how, when and where to resort to personal supervision or to outworking or sub-contracting, when and where to buy and sell, and the like. In modern society, they extend to a multiplicity of available techniques, from corporate planning, accountancy, marketing and management information systems to 'scientific management', 'human relations', and their successors.

Rationality is as much part and parcel of the history of technological progress, social and material, as it is in the case of natural science - so far as the conventional account goes. We have in recent years come to acknowledge the 'paradigm shifts' and false leads that give scientific progress a rather more wayward track record than it was accorded in the past. The record of social technology is as much a history of obsolete practices, gross errors and misdirections as it is of the onward and upward path that Karl Marx, no less than Samuel Smiles, saw in it. Industrial organisation as a whole in the latter half of the twentieth century is portrayed in Stinchcombe's essay as a museum of arrangements which are no more than the fossil remains of the structures established during the formative and boom years of individual industries from the Industrial Revolution onwards.

Once the nature of rationality as the all-sufficient principle of bureaucratic organisation is called into question, a further question that presents itself is whether there were propensities - purposes, impulses, motives - at work other than, as Weber believed, the propensity for rationality which Western man discovered within himself.

Part of the answer surely lies in the mechanism of social control which the bureaucratic form of organisation afforded. For it is clear that both political and business leaders found that an administrative apparatus which combined the coordination of activities with control over them could be turned to very good use. Following on the rapid growth in the bureaucratic machinery of government there was an accelerated growth of a bureaucratic style of management and administration in more and more departments of economic and social life. In all cases, the overt reason was the need to cope with growing scale and complexity but, as Hinsley went on to point out, the need to develop mechanisms of control over people and their actions was just as important. All European governments "relied on this development - on the growth and professionalism of bureaucracy, the army and the police; on the vast improvement of weapons and transport; on the increasing possibilities of controlling public opinion and securing public loyalty in the press, the

widespread adoption of conscription and the provision of state education; on all these causes and consequences of increasing centralisation - for the maintenance of stability."<sup>32</sup>

We have also become rather less impressed than Weber and his contemporaries by the achievements of scientific management - although this does not mean that there is any less effort made to accomplish essentially the same effects. Instead of discipline being enforced by threat of punishment or penalty, it is nowadays rather sought through procedures designed to instil loyalty to the undertaking and commitment to work. Even so, 'carrying out orders' or 'following instructions' is no less an essential component of most contemporary organisations than was 'obeying commands' in the military, administrative and industrial bureaucracies of Weber's day. As such, they are instruments in the hands of a general, a minister, or the chief executive of a company.

These newer forms of social control have multiplied and expanded in scope enormously since the seventeenth century under the driving force of 'modernisation' - that all-embracing dynamic of historical change which comprehends scientific progress, industrialisation, and the formation of modern nation states. And the means of social control have multiplied and expanded because modernisation itself is taken up with the pursuit of power.

## II POWER

In the present context, 'power' is a theme of secondary importance to the two main topics represented in the title. The same is true of 'social organisation'. This is not to say that they are in themselves of less consequence, which would be absurd. The intention is simply to present them as thematically subordinate to 'organisation' in the first place, and 'social order' in the second. There are obviously lengthy stretches of history during which they assumed overriding importance.

The most obvious (and, as far as what we know of the history of mankind is concerned, frequent) manifestation of the relationship of power to organisation is in the use of physical violence. And there are two observations to be made about the use made of physical violence as the chosen instrument of power. The first refers back to the aphorism about power as the ability "not just to act but to act in concert." 'L'homme armé' of the Middle Ages, like Hume's 'praetorian guards' and 'mamalukes', was bound to his leader by common interest, enjoying a share of the profits of organised collective action; and he was perfectly capable of joining with his fellows to have his leader replaced if the profits seemed insufficient against the demands made on him and the risks he ran.

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<sup>32</sup> F.H.Hinsley, op. cit., p.34.

The second relates to the fact that in almost all cases of the use of violence, it is employed not so much as the instrument of command itself but as a means of terrifying others into submission by the threat of violence. Battles are won not when the defeated are annihilated but when the survivors among them take to flight or surrender.

The point is made by Georg Simmel in a passage to the effect that even what we call the 'absolute' coercion imposed by a tyrant is relative. Of course, there is no choice when the action demanded of us is actually forced on us by main physical strength. Then we have no freedom to choose not to obey. In all other cases, what we choose to do may well be conditioned by our desire to escape the dire consequences of refusal. But we do have a choice.<sup>33</sup> Social -relationships are two-way affairs. This is just as true for power relationships as it is for other kinds. And power is - can only be - exercised through a relationship. To have power means that others demonstrate that they acknowledge it; to exercise power means that others act in an acceptably responsive fashion. This is true even in the extreme case of coercion by violence. "Nobody, in general, wishes that his influence completely determine the other individual. He rather wants this influence, this determination of the other, to act back on him. Even the abstract will-to-dominate, therefore, is a case of interaction. This will draws its satisfaction from the fact that the acting or suffering of the other, his positive or negative condition, offers itself to the dominator as the product of his will.... [and] consciousness of his efficacy."<sup>34</sup>

There are other complications, some of which are brought to light in Dennis Wrong's book on power, which established itself fairly rapidly among social scientists as a comprehensive and authoritative text.<sup>35</sup> 'Violence', in the categorical schema he adopts, is a sub-category subsumed under 'force' along with other sub-categories. (The other main categories of power are listed as 'manipulation', 'persuasion', and authority'.) 'Force' counts not only as physical force but also as what he calls 'psychic' force - from defamation, abuse, and blackmail through to ritual curses, ceremonies of degradation and humiliation, and excommunication or ostracism. The subdivisions he introduces under 'physical force' are even more striking. 'Violence' is only one aspect; the other is 'non-violent action'. Non-violent action represents Simmel's 'choice' not to accede to the exercise of power. People, individually and en masse have exerted power (notably in India and in the southern States of the U.S.) through passive resistance to authority, even when it resorts to violence, interposing their own bodies to prevent or restrain its actions.

The 'power' invoked by non-violent action is that of public opinion, or sentiment, with the implication that to use violence can generate more opposition. Thus there exists the possibility that resistance may render violence powerless, in that others not immediately involved may side with the opposition.

Power does not divide up the world into two sides, those with power and those subject to it. Instead, it takes its place in the range of all the possible ways in which people do in

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<sup>33</sup> G.Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (ed. and trans. K.H.Wolff), Free Press, 1950, p.182.

<sup>34</sup> G.Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, p. 181.

<sup>35</sup> D.Wrong, *Power: Its Forms, Bases, and Uses*, Blackwell, 2nd. edn., 1988.

fact behave towards each other. Reciprocity, or mutuality, enters by definition into all social relationships. So it is with power relationships.

In modern society, of course, while coercion by violence remains as a last resort, power is for the most part exercised in terms of authority, the other major division of power, alongside 'force', in Dennis Wrong's schema, and which receives most attention, as one might expect. There are as many as five kinds specified: coercion, inducement, legitimate authority, competent authority and personal authority. Again, as in the case of the three sub-categories of 'force' (physical violence, non-violence, and 'psychic' force), the distinctions relate not only to the ways in which authority may be manifested but also to the various fields in which they are characteristically, though not of course, exclusively, applied: the political for 'coercion', the economic for 'inducement', organisations for the 'legitimate', specialist knowledge and skill for the 'competent', and loyalty and love for the 'personal' forms of authority.

If we turn to Max Weber's formulation of the nature of authority, which still remains the most widely accepted, one finds that power is still evinced in concerted action, but this time the human ability to act in concert is a consequence of the authority exercised over people by an accepted leader. 'Acceptance' is centrally important. Power as authority exists only in so far as it is acknowledged by those over whom it is exercised - which looks tautologous but isn't. They may accept commands and judgments from someone who stands in relation to them much as his forefathers, or predecessors, did to theirs. Or they may do so because they believe him possessed of greater wisdom, knowledge, intellect, relevant experience, or skill. Thirdly, his authority may consist in their acknowledging his superior physical prowess, wealth, or spiritual powers. Typical of modern society, however, is for authority to be accepted throughout society at large because it is backed by regulations regarded as rational which are framed in accordance with a system of law also regarded as rational. It is precisely this kind of authority which is incorporated in Max Weber's conception of modern bureaucracy, in which authority is sustained by its 'rationality'.

Weber's is the clearest statement of what has been the orthodox conception of the power exercised by governmental and other administrative authorities since the seventeenth century. It centres on legitimate authority, but is founded on the notion of sovereignty both in its original monarchic sense and in the reconstructed contractual form it assumed in the eighteenth century and since. And it is just this notion which has been under attack as out of date, or too limited, or both.

In both its traditional and its reconstructed meaning, the notion treats the power of authority as a kind of property, just like physical strength or skill, superior wisdom, experience or wealth, which is possessed by some, who, in terms decided ultimately by a system of law or by custom which has the force of law, are able to exercise power over others. Thus, authority goes with superior status within a properly constituted and organised society. Superior status carries the ability to call on more resources than are available to subordinates. This authority, it is worth noting, belongs to the rich by virtue of their higher status in the organisation of society, as it did also in the past to those who

were socially superior by right of birth. Despite Brian Barry's contention that wealth simply means ability to choose, rather than power,<sup>36</sup> there is power in claiming -deference and gaining privileged access; the remark of an English judge about the law being open to all, 'just like the Ritz', would otherwise not carry the weight of irony which makes it so frequently quoted.

All of which gives the 'cui bono' question a still sharper point. How is it that, in view of the gross inequalities which still prevail in society, authority can rest on popular support which is said to come from trust in 'the rule of law', or the superior wisdom and competence of those in government, or from shared goals and values and a constellation of interests common to all?

Ideology, in the Marxist sense widely adopted in the twentieth century, seemed to point to a solution of the problem of popular support. It suggests, too, that there are other sorts of power than the exercise of 'domination'. The role of ideology was, however, played down by Marx and most of his followers, who relegated it to the status of epiphenomenon, an adjunct of the control of 'true' power, which was military, political or, in the modern state, economic. It was left for Gramsci to show how this obscured the patently obvious fact that it was popular support which maintained most forms of government most of the time, whatever power base they might have, or have had. It was especially democratic parliamentary regimes which had become adept at establishing hegemony, consensus and force combined, each complementing and balancing the other, with force appearing to be supported by the agreement of the majority.

The other criticism of Weber's "jural" sovereignty is that it ignores the practicalities of politics. Even under so-called "absolute" monarchy, it has been argued, rival groups competed for dominance in the royal councils. Nor was it a matter simply of sovereign power consisting in the monarch's monopoly control of the armed strength necessary to suppress opposition; in one country after another the resources which opposition could call upon proved to be just as powerful, once the varied political interests of opposition found it possible to act in concert. In the parliamentary democracies which emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, supreme power was something contended for by rival political parties, themselves ad hoc coalitions of contending interest groups.<sup>37</sup> The level of stability necessary for any kind of complex civil society to survive was ensured by "consent," a kind of tacit contractual understanding arrived at by all parties to keep rivalry and contention within the bounds of persuasion in argument and debate. This second 'liberal' formulation emerged during the nineteenth century, but is nowadays more easily recognisable as that of the school of American political scientists which became prominent in the 1950's. It is a way of looking at the nature of governmental power not far removed from conceiving of it as founded on a relatively stable equilibrium sustained by competing interest groups - rather in the manner predicated of a national economy in classical economics.

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<sup>36</sup> B. Barry, "The Uses of Power", in *Democracy, Power and Justice*, O.U.P., 1989, p.308.

<sup>37</sup> See P. Hollis (ed.), *Pressures from Without*, Arnold, 1974.

The analogy with classical economic theory should not be pressed too far. Governmental power (sc. "the modern state") could equally well be said to be founded on a collusive understanding among the major contenders 'inside' the system aimed at suppressing actual or potential contenders outside it. And this is in fact how Foucault sees it. The argument rests on his contention that the shift from power as violence to power as authority in modern times reflects the transition from power as *pouvoir* to power as *puissance* - a property which changes hands at certain determinate and historically specified moments. At these times, contention between classes or interest groups has broken out into open conflict, leading to a period of turbulence in which the pre-existing balance of political forces has been destabilised and then disestablished.<sup>38</sup> The superior force - armed or -unarmed - seized by or available to one or more of the groups at some point is then used to freeze open conflict between political groups into the particular imbalance prevailing at that point. What is achieved is in fact a stabilising of whatever balance of power existed at the time between contending classes and social groups, however unequal or inequitable their relative situations were. This happened in the most obvious, "revolutionary," sense two or three times in England during the seventeenth century and more frequently in France since 1789, but it has happened also in plenty of other countries, whether or not the change has been accomplished by revolution. Once the new constitutional form is established, power reverts to those now 'on top'.

The pluralism ("conflict-repression") of American political scientists, like the contractualism of earlier political philosophers and the classic monarchism of early modern Europe and the quasi-clientage of medieval feudalism, takes political power "to be a right, which one is able to possess like a commodity, and which one can in consequence transfer or alienate, either wholly or partially, through a legal act or through some act that establishes a right, such as takes place through cession or contract."<sup>39</sup> Marxist interpretations have adopted the same formula, with property rights (ownership of the means of production) seen as the legitimating principle behind political domination.

In either case, as Foucault saw it, the result has been the same. It is one in which power is exercised "perpetually to reinscribe" whatever disequilibrium had been established after some critical episode in the history of a country "in social institutions, economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies of each and every one of us."<sup>40</sup> In modern society, the power and authority of a regime's establishment (sc. 'the State') has come to 'colonise' (Foucault's word) the norms of right, proper, or good conduct which we deliberately, half-consciously, or unwittingly follow, and in so doing, see to it that public order is maintained.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Raymond Aron has emphasised the usefulness of the two words for power that exist in French: *puissance*, denoting capability, and *pouvoir*, referring to the actual exercise of power. See R. Aron, "Macht, Power, Puissance: prose démocratique ou poésie démoniaque?", *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. V, 1964, pp. 27-33.

<sup>39</sup> M. Foucault, "Two Lectures", in *Power/Knowledge*, (Ed. C. Gordon), Harvester Press, 1980, p.88.

<sup>40</sup> M. Foucault, "Two Lectures", p.88.

<sup>41</sup> M. Foucault, "Two Lectures", p.108.

Foucault's term for this expropriation, and adaptation, by the state of the normative controls by which public order in society is maintained is 'normalisation'. It is by no means the only method by which the state supports its authority, but it is the method which characterises the modern democratic state. 'Normalisation' (the undertone which the word's use in East European regimes for the suppression of riots, strikes and dissident movements was all too relevant at the time Foucault was writing) is a complex system in which we are all agents of power, all involved in the exercise of power, all work for the maintenance of the system of public order ordained by 'the powers that be': the social group or class which gained possession of state power some time in the past.

Foucault conceives of power, in its "normalising" guise, as working from the bottom up, not from the top (jural sovereignty, supremacy after struggle) down. He locates power "at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary, that is, in its more regional and local forms, in its institutions." The "paramount concern, in fact, should be with the point where power surmounts the rules of right" (i.e., justice) ... "and extends itself beyond them, invests itself in institutions, becomes embodied in techniques, and equips itself with instruments and even violent means of material intervention."<sup>42</sup> And he follows this -up by referring to his own studies of the history of prisons and of the treatment of the insane. Power looked at in this way is seen as the disciplining of men, much as science and technology is envisaged as the disciplining of nature. The disciplines are essentially social; "they are the disciplines of the barracks, the hospital, the school, the factory."<sup>43</sup> (cf. John Keegan, p. 7, above.)

They are also (and Foucault did add them in his later writings), the disciplines of the family, of the neighbourhood, and of the social encounters of everyday. For the "disciplining" is, in the first place, a matter of adopting the normative codes of behaviour prevailing in society as one's own, through the socialising agencies of family and school. Inducements are offered by socially - sometimes legally - accredited agents of the normative disciplines for conformity and penalties exacted for misconduct. With the normalising agencies of social control serving to complement traditional instruments of power and authority, state and civil society become indistinguishable. 'Liberal' democracies are, in his terms, no less totalitarian than the regimes of fascist and communist states - which claimed the same title of democracies.

All of which seems to bring it close to Gramsci's notion of hegemony.

### **III SOCIAL ORDER**

Social order, the second major theme of this book, is not to be seen as standing over against organisation. In the case of Athens, in the classical period, at the very beginning

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<sup>42</sup> M.Foucault, "Two Lectures", p.97.

<sup>43</sup> C.Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth", Political Theory, Vol.12, 1984, p.159.

of European history, social order is best envisaged as generating, or containing, organisation - the overt and legal foundation on which the life of society was built, and, if it seemed necessary, organised. As we shall see, in Chapter 1, immediately following these preliminaries, there was, for example, nothing in the constitution of Athens which bears the faintest resemblance to bureaucracy.

Over time, however, social order has become more and more overlaid with (or taken over by) the structures of command organisation.

Since the construction of this book follows a chronological sequence, it starts with the highly developed, consciously recognised conception of social order as *politeia*, which permeated the political and administrative arrangements of Athens. It did not in this form survive the conquest of Greece by Macedonia. But something of the same idea of social order, albeit more and more depleted, less and less relevant to organisation and power persisted, either gradually or piecemeal, for a very long time - until the eighteenth century, in fact. For the most part, however, it assumed the form of an implicit moral code by which ordinary conduct and the practicalities of everyday life were prescribed.

In its place, everyday life and the affairs of society as a whole came eventually to be conducted in terms of what is regarded as 'public order'. Public order, imposed by organisation under superior authority, something exogenous to individual members of society, replaced 'social order', which is endogenous to those individuals, created by their own desire, and maintained by their actions.

This is not to say that the transition from social order to public order can be explained in terms of teleological necessity or causal process.<sup>44</sup>

Agglomerations of power or enlargements in the - sheer size and complexity of political units did further the process, but there are plenty of times when events and movement halted or reversed it, and others when it has been diverted.

One has, in short, to come to terms with the essential discontinuity of history. Accident enters in. Which is not to say that causal processes are to be excluded; they have their place in any account of adaptation to new circumstances.

The transformation of the relationship between social order and organisation took over two thousand years to accomplish. When we backtrack into the past as far as classical Athens, both social order and organisation are seen as constituted in and by the action of the members of any collectivity. They, as autonomous individuals, are naturally disposed to strive towards the best for themselves, and this is done by creating a civilised order of society. By the time of Aristotle, this is seen as coming first: man is a social animal and

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<sup>44</sup> "The postulate that 'what actually happened' did so of necessity is a classic[al] retrospective illusion of historical consciousness, which sees the past as a field of possibilities within which 'what actually happened' appears ex post facto as the only future for that past." (F. Furet, *Penser la Revolution Francaise*, Gallimard, 1978, p.35.)

as such owes everything to the social and political community - the polis - in which he was born, and which he is, and feels, bound to sustain.

As Aristotle put it, 'the polis is prior to the individual'. *Politeia*, the word which is closest to the meaning of social order, means citizenship. But it was also applied to the whole body of citizens, with the polis simply the realisation of a way of life pursued by a community conscious of its common destiny. It was this which underlay the primary obligation of citizens: to defend the polis against all the forces, internal as well as external, which might destroy or disrupt it.

Social order in the pristine form of *politeia* disappeared with Greek independence. In Rome, the core obligation to serve in the army, along with certain heavily qualified voting rights did obtain in the early Republic, but the first of these became obsolete in the second century B.C., when it was abandoned in favour of paid armed service by men recruited from all over Italy, and the second ceased to be relevant with the inauguration of the Empire a hundred years later.

A certain civic cohesiveness and sense of communal obligation persisted even within the increasingly hierarchic ordering of society under the Roman Empire. Separate, but significant for the future, was the recrudescence of social order not in the classical Greek sense but on the small, particularist, scale discernible in the communities of Christians that made their appearance in the eastern Mediterranean in the second and third centuries.

Thereafter, it makes an appearance in two regards: first, in terms of religious doctrine; secondly, in the practice of everyday life and, spasmodically, in movements which are sometimes religious, sometimes political, sometimes both.

Plotinus, and more especially Augustine, conceived of a social order subsumed under the idea of existence in a divinely ordained universe - the City (i.e. *polis*, *civitas*) of God. Man is God's creature, owes everything to God, and is subject to his sovereign rule. It is a doctrine that held good throughout the Middle Ages, and provided the foundation for the idea of the Church as a community of believers, equal before God, as well as for the multiplicity of monastic orders. But it coexisted with hierarchic orders of secular power and clerical authority.

By the thirteenth century complications had set in. Law - Roman law - had been rediscovered and used as a great debating ground in the new universities. 'Law', as Maitland said, 'became the point where life and logic met'. It provided an arena for ideological conflict between Popes and Emperors, between church and state. Secondly, with the rediscovery of Aristotle at more or less the same time, there occurred what Walter Ullman called 'a conceptual revolution', with Aquinas as the central figure.

The synthesis propounded by Aquinas conceived of a natural law which prevails among men in that they are subject to divine law. Natural law is necessarily a reflection of divine law in that men, uniquely, are rational creatures who seek to make the best of themselves, as Aristotle saw, and so frame laws which are in accordance with divine law.

Meanwhile, a fuller rendering of social order, in the sense of political and social practicalities, emerged in the eleventh century communes of Italy and France. As it was in Greece and the early Roman Republic, service in the army and political participation in the city republics of Italy were seen as part and parcel of citizenship, underpinned by religious belief. Along with these went equality before the law (of a sort) and economic and social liberties (of a sort).

But what happened in these city-republics, of which so much has been made by historians in recent years, represents only the more salient, publicised, or recorded features of the 'communality' which prevailed in medieval society. Government, in the sense of the ordering of everyday social and economic life through the exercise of power and authority by a central government through an administrative system, had a very limited range. The orderly conduct of the everyday affairs of the people at large was very much their own business.

It made good sense in any case for this to be so. The sense of binding interdependence conveyed in accounts of early village settlements makes itself felt in descriptions of many of the institutions of the early Middle Ages. Concerted action and decision-making in public affairs, social, legal, religious, and political, rested on assumptions about the inescapable commitment of all members of a community to each other and to it. In England, this held good even at the level of the shire in some respects, and also for the better-off. "We must learn to think of the county," says Maitland, "as an organised unity which has long held a common life, common rights and common duties."<sup>45</sup>

Unanimity (or the consent of all concerned to a majority vote) were not the preserves of local political decisions and legal judgments only. Later on, when urban communities organised themselves, the same principle applied to what are now services, of the kind we take for granted will be performed by workmen organised by local authorities and paid for out of national and local taxes. In the Middle Ages and for centuries after, "each inhabitant was under obligation to supply and light the lantern at his door, to pave and sweep the street in front of his own house or workshop, to supply his own horses or his own labour for the roads he used, to maintain at his own cost the primitive embankment that protected his holding from the flood, or even to perform in his turn the duties of the various Parish offices."<sup>46</sup>

With the sixteenth century came monarchism, radical religious dissent, and commercial venture on a larger scale. The interests of religious faith and commercial advantage were added to those of maintaining kingly power or challenging it, of the defence of supremacy or of privilege. The Middle Ages had hardly been peaceful, but the wars, internecine as well as international, that filled the three centuries of monarchism were on a larger scale, protracted and expensive.

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<sup>46</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government: Statutory Authorities for Special Purpose*, Longmans, 1922, p.442.

It was Aquinas' synthesis of Aristotle and Augustine, curiously enough, that came to serve as intellectual underpinning for the assault, in the name of natural law, natural justice and natural rights, on the divinely ordained sovereignty of kings and princes. The first hint of any disjunction comes in the sixteenth century, when it seemed proper for a philosopher of law like Suarez, even though working within the tradition unbroken since Aquinas, to provide some supplementary account of man-made law. Natural, or divine, law, contained principles of behaviour which were self-evident. Man-made law had to be instituted for each individual community. In both cases, however, obedience to law was morally binding on individuals. Man was God's creature, and so ought to obey his commands. Man was created by God as a social and rational being "who lives fully only in society; for peaceful organised life, God created rulers in society, and their precepts are law and to be obeyed."<sup>47</sup> The authority of rulers and of law derived, ultimately, from God.

While obedience to law was obligatory (and the sovereign legislator could impose penalties), man was still subject to natural law as God's ordinance. With Grotius and Pufendorf in the sixteenth century, the possibility of a difference between divine, or 'natural', law and man-made 'positive' law became admissible.

Sovereignty, which had been split unevenly, and uneasily, between the power of emperors and kings and the authority of popes, now became something claimed by monarchs and disputed by combinations of interests - aristocratic, religious, privileged, commercial - which at times found support from a larger public and even, briefly and dramatically, the people at large. During the monarchic period itself (1500-1800), such combinations of interest in some countries, notably Holland, England and, eventually, France, succeeded in getting enough public and, at the critical time, popular support to win sovereignty, either altogether or largely, from their hereditary rulers. Elsewhere, in Germany, Spain and Italy, nothing like the same transfer of sovereignty occurred until the late nineteenth, or the twentieth, century.

Contention over sovereignty eroded the last vestiges of social order's infusion in everyday life and the practical arrangement of community affairs. Its place was taken over by organisations authorised by laws enacted by whatever body was recognised as constitutionally supreme. Social order - in what I am taking to be its original sense - virtually disappeared from intellectual discourse and for the most part lost any public acknowledgment.

By the eighteenth century, indeed, any conceptual distinction between social order and public order had been elided. The word 'police', in English as in other west European languages, retained its relatively abstract meaning, but stood for public order and the organisation of civil society in general. Thus, in 1763, when Adam Smith delivered his Glasgow University lectures on jurisprudence, he noted that "The four great objects of law are justice, police, revenue and arms." The objects of 'police', when he came to it,

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<sup>47</sup> A.Watson, "Natural Law and English Legal Positivism" in *Failures of the Legal Imagination*, Scottish Academic Pr. 1988, p.114.

were defined as, "the cheapness of commodities, public security, and cleanliness," adding, further on, the derivation of the word, through French, from the Greek *politeia*. *Politeia*, Smith went on, was properly the policy of civil government, but now it means "the regulation of the inferior parts of government, viz, cleanliness, security, and cheapness or plenty."<sup>48</sup>

Public order is nevertheless beset by a familiar cluster of long-standing problems. Such problems arise in the first place from the uncertainty and fragility that beset the orderliness, whatever its level, that is essential for a society. The central question is the familiar one of 'how is society possible?'. How can any adequate level of public order be maintained in the face of all the entrenched forms of inequality, injustice, discriminatory practices, political dissension, criminal activity, blatant acquisitiveness, violence and disorder that pervades society - our own as well as virtually all others, past and present? How does public order manage to contain the complex hostilities that exist within the family, among kinsfolk, in the everyday intercourse of neighbourhood and community, and in the exploitative relationships which embody power and authority, in the organisations and institutions which constitute the setting of individual lives?

Hobbes is usually credited with the new formulation and its rationale. Left to themselves, men - driven by greed, love of mastery over others, and pride - are naturally competitive and contentious. It follows that the state of nature among humankind is, in his over-familiar words, a war of all against all, and "the life of man," therefore, "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short."

It could, I suppose, be argued that Hobbes' observation was a fairly unremarkable conclusion to be drawn from the barbarities of the Thirty Years War in Germany, the Fronde in France, and the disorders of civil war in England and Scotland. His contemporary, Pascal, who lived through the same events, was driven to write "*Tous les hommes se haïssent naturellement l'un l'autre*". The twentieth century, one has to remember, has been still more prodigal with testimony of the same kind.

Hobbes' own answer was that the way to salvation (civilised life) is pointed out by reason, which impels man to surrender his 'natural rights' to a sovereign who would be empowered by all to use their combined force to compel obedience to law and the fulfilment of contracts.

Hobbes' 'state of nature' and the conclusion he drew from it is now reckoned, following Macpherson, as amounting to no more than a counterfactual hypothesis - "a logical abstraction drawn from the behaviour of men in civilized society.".... "His state of nature is a statement of the behaviour of men as they now are, men who live in civilized societies and have the desires of civilized men, would be led if all law and contract enforcement (i.e., even the present imperfect enforcement) were removed. To get the

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<sup>48</sup> Adam Smith, quoted E.Cannan, Introduction to *The Wealth of Nations*, Modern Library edn., 1937, p.xxviii.

state of nature, Hobbes has set aside law, but not the socially acquired behaviour and desires of men."<sup>49</sup>

This kind of argument does not, however, take us very far. It leaves aside the question of how 'civilised society' ever came into existence. To speak of civilised behaviour and desires as 'socially acquired' is simply tautologous. Hobbes' 'natural self' is 'economic man' writ large, driven by fear and vain glory as well as by greed.

Why should such a creature ever have come to accept public order - to enter into a relationship by which he would be obliged to submit to a sovereign who would then impose law and enforce contracts so that he could live in a civilised society of which he could have had no prior knowledge and in any case is presumably 'unnatural' to him? The utilitarians saw the light of reason as the answer, but this alone is not enough, as Durkheim pointed out; given the proclivities Hobbes ascribes to 'natural man,' one must suppose that reason would be put to use to serve rather than thwart them.

Standing over and against this first Hobbesian question there is also a reverse question. It is just as difficult to see how a regulatory system of public order could per se generate, reflect or even accommodate the personal attachments and social involvements that pervade the same relationships and institutional structures.

With the eighteenth century, we seem to return to the essentially two-sided idea of the Greeks. But there is a difference. The idea of a normative order as the moral, quasi-religious, essence of the polis is replaced by secular, rationalist, notions, like Locke's 'trust,' Rousseau's 'social contract,' and the endeavours at social analysis of Frances Hutchinson, Adam Smith, and David Hume. For the eighteenth century Scottish philosophers, the manifold achievements of man in building the material, cultural, spiritual and economic environment of a civilised life, the plenitude of activities in which man engaged, were only possible because of the existence of public order and the established institutions of civil society. On the other hand, ordered society and social organisation were, in their turn, made possible because of social order.

The notion of social order reflected in their writings belongs to the same period in which, significantly enough, Bury saw "the idea of progress" to have originated. It came at a time when the novel experience of relative political, social and religious stability, after the turbulence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, coincided with striking advances in scientific knowledge which seemed to carry with them the prospect of radical improvement in human affairs. At the same time, people saw themselves surrounded by institutional and organisational constructs surviving from the past and visible now as obstacles to progress, and ripe for change. Students of political, economic and social behaviour were in a position to analyse and evaluate the old order and to develop a lively awareness of how dissonant it was with the practicalities of contemporary life and with new aspirations and possibilities. This is most clearly visible in Adam Smith's

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<sup>49</sup> C.B.Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, p.23 and p.22.

protracted campaign against the mischief wrought by systems of regulation, past and present.

Present in man, as they saw it, there are specific needs, propensities, feelings, emotions - 'passions' and, corresponding with these, an understanding of the existence of similar, or parallel passions in others. For Hume, the individual is both creature and creator of society, the means by which he can remedy his deficiencies, satisfy his needs, and realise his values.

To quote Duncan Forbes: "Hume's awareness of man's social interdependence is so striking a feature of his thought, in the Treatise especially, that it would be nearer the mark to say that for him society is the 'natural unit.' Not only is man so peculiarly helpless by himself, his needs so many compared with other animals and his ability to satisfy them so feeble that 'it is by society alone that he is able to satisfy his defects' (Treatise, p.485)."<sup>50</sup> And -Adam Smith's writings show clearly enough that he shared the same view, as Amartya Sen has pointed out in his strictures on the "overenthusiastic admirers" of Smith, who, "contrary to what he actually said", have made him "the 'guru' of self-interest."<sup>51</sup>

While it is in Hume's and Smith's writings that this restored view of the two-sided nature of social order is most clearly articulated, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Condorcet shared the same general approach. Not that it was confined to the philosophically inclined; Alasdair MacIntyre sees the same comprehension manifested in the writings of Cobbett.<sup>52</sup>

Even Kant's view of law (Recht) as composed out of the conditions under which the voluntary actions of one individual could be brought into harmony with those of everyone else under a universal rule of freedom is visible as a variant of the same general approach. Kant's rationalisation of the principles of law (albeit as justice rather than a system of positive law) provides the most striking as well as the first presentation of what might be called the liberal communitarian view of public/social order. Natural rights derived from some divine, sovereign, or external source were eliminated from his scheme of things. The requirement laid on each individual was that he should so act that, in the free exercise of his will, he might nevertheless co-exist in freedom with all others.

But within two generations after the death of Hume and Smith, the intellectual climate was utterly changed. The Great Transformation of the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution also saw the birth of modern bureaucracy. In the case of public order, the change made itself apparent in the shift of attention back to constitutional structures on the one hand and, on the other, to systems of law - and both intersect even more closely than in previous centuries. During most of the nineteenth century, both areas of discussion were dominated by the approaches which came to be known as utilitarianism and positivism.

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<sup>50</sup> D.Forbes, Hume's Philosophical Politics, C.U.P., 1975

<sup>51</sup> Amartya Sen, Ethics and Economics, Blackwell, p.24. See also "Adam Smith's Prudence," in S.Lall & F.Stewart, Theory and Reality in Development, Macmillan, 1986.

<sup>52</sup> A.MacIntyre, After Virtue, Duckworth, 1981 pp.222-6.

Bentham's ridicule of 'natural rights' not only as nonsensical but as "nonsense on stilts" came on top of the rejection of ideas about the 'rights of man', tainted as they were by the memory of what had been done in their name in France. The idea of public order was now taken, once again, to mean that any 'natural rights' which might be thought to exist belonged to a sovereign power empowered by all to compel obedience to law and the fulfilment of contracts. Trust - a kind of bargain struck between representative government and people - was forgotten. Both Bentham and, following him, Austin, seem in fact to have accepted Hobbes' solution. They saw public order as sustained by a system of law. Laws are commands of a sovereign lawgiver, whether absolute monarch or elected legislature, to which members of a society are subject. There is a clear vertical relationship between subjects who are obliged to obey the law, and a sovereign power which issues commands which are incorporated in a system of law.

Austin's analytical approach was based, so it was claimed, on observation of the way in which law operated and was enacted rather than on principles of morality and justice. The same pragmatic, utilitarian, positivist, approach was adopted by legal theorists in Germany and France, and dominated jurisprudence throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

The conception of law embodied in Austin's analysis has been likened (by H.L.A.Hart) to the compulsion to obey a gunman ordering his victim to hand over his money, threatening to shoot him if he refuses.<sup>53</sup> Obligation to obey stems, in the last resort, from the sanctions which threaten the disobedient. Nevertheless, while - for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries - the view of law as commands backed by threats has been admitted to obtain for some aspects of any legal system (though Kelsen remained positivist enough to regard law as totally distinct from moral justice), there have been amendments to the strictly Austinian view of law as commands backed by threats. Most latterday writers supplement it by referring to habituation, susceptibility to moral rules and 'public opinion', or a 'sense of justice' inherent in virtually everyone, even though it may not guide their behaviour.

In H.L.A.Hart's account, which has attracted more attention than most, at least in the English-speaking world, the rule of law is founded on a general 'rule of recognition'. 'Recognition' is accorded not to abstract principles of justice or to regard for others (which, Hart concedes, may obtain for everyday civility and good manners) but to a particular group or set of individuals to whom the community as a whole assigns the authority to make, administer and enforce law.

It seems widely accepted by modern legal theorists that most people, most of the time, obey the law out of the fear of retribution if they do not, or habit; simply, it makes sense to do so, their circumstances being what they are. Hart, while acknowledging these other elements, sees the authority of the legal system as resting, ultimately, in the surrender by the community of the right to make laws and administer justice to a specific set of its

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<sup>53</sup>H.L.A.Hart, *The Concept of Law*, O.U.P., 1961, p. 6.

members. In this regard, Hart's thesis is in its own terms as positivist as Austin's. Both concentrate on the analysis of the law as it is, and on the reasons, in empirical terms, why it is obeyed.

What is truly remarkable is the way in which the conception both of public order and of law have been stripped down until both are seen as manifestations of an authority which has been surrendered by the whole community to a specially designated group of people in the case of law, and to some immanent, impersonal, principle in the case of public order. The difference over time from the post-Hobbesian period becomes clear when one compares Hart's 'rule of recognition' with Locke's notion of trust.

Both Locke and Hart argue their case in the legal terms familiar to them. Neither of them takes it that some contractual bond links community and lawgivers; a contract is an agreement between two independent parties, each with rights of his own, who surrender some of these rights 'for a consideration'. For Locke, the bond is that of trust. In the case of trust, the beneficiary (i.e., the community) has rights against the trustee; the trustee (government, in this case) has duties to the beneficiary, and no countervailing rights.<sup>54</sup> No such -one-sided liability enters into Hart's account. Hence, while in Locke's view of the relationship, the people, as beneficiary, have the right to remove the government, as trustee, for abuse or neglect of its powers, in Hart's version, the power to make law and enforce it is simply made over by the community to a particular set of individuals.

As for any conception of social order in its primordial sense, we seem to have lost our hold altogether on that half of the two-sided conception of the relationship between the individual and public or social order which saw orderliness as an historical creation for which its present members have to assume responsibility.

Awareness of this loss of hold is a view which is common to a number of historians of political and social ideas, like J.G.A.Pocock, Quentin Skinner and John Dunn, and to historically-minded moral philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre. Somewhere in the course of history (English, or Western European, history of course) we have lost control of our situation and our destiny. The picture of individual man as the creator of the society from which he draws so much of his attainments as well as his support has been swamped by that of control over his destiny by organised impersonal 'structures', over his life-chances by his social situation, over his beliefs and his mental equipment by his cultural placement, over his passions and feelings by drives and constraints of which he is unconscious, and over even his ability to choose between good and evil by the circumstances of his birth and upbringing. All of them find reinforcement and instrumental agencies in the organised systems and institutions in which the individual lives out his life, and on which he has become almost utterly dependent. Law takes its place among these organisations and institutions which dominate contemporary society.

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<sup>54</sup>Picking on trust, which is special to English law, as the governing principle was not peculiar to Locke. As Maitland remarked, "in the course of the eighteenth century it became a parliamentary commonplace that all political power is a trust." (Introduction to O.Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Ages*, C.U.P., 1900, p. xxxvi).

John Dunn speaks of "the increasingly alienated vision" of social order we now have, in which the individual has become the overburdened inheritor of a vast array of political and social relations which it is futile for him to try to affect, still less to alter.<sup>55</sup> For MacIntyre, we have reached a point where we can no longer realise the nature of the catastrophe we have suffered - which is the loss of any comprehension, theoretical or practical, of our moral situation.<sup>56</sup>

What all this left us with was a conception of social order entirely in terms of public order: a finished system which we individually acknowledge by obeying its rules. And it is this truncated version, one-sided and gloom-laden, that has been reflected in most accounts of social order as public order in recent years.

Of itself, this could be evidence of the validity of the secular unfolding of impersonal forces. It could be read as an inevitable reversal of the tidal wave of optimistic belief in progress towards a future of unending improvement in the human condition which began with the Enlightenment and persisted until the end of the Victorian Age. In any case, one consequence was that interest in moral philosophy faded away; what discussion there was of social order or public order - order in society - was kept going by new academic breeds: sociologists, social anthropologists, and political scientists.

One could say that play was resumed with the publication of John Rawls' *Theory of Justice*<sup>57</sup>. But it is also true that at least some of the writers mentioned in the last few paragraphs or two are not quite as woebegone as, for example, Dunn and MacIntyre suggest. True, Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* is much taken up with damning the world we have landed up in; but in doing so, he takes time to portray the world we have lost. What he offers is the resurrection of the world of Augustine or Aquinas. This has not met with much response.

Rawls' book did attract a truly surprising amount of attention, and served - after a rejoinder duly appeared<sup>58</sup> to touch off what has been labelled the 'communitarian-libertarian' debate. Further, the writings of Charles Taylor and Michael Sandel, along with those of Bernard Williams, Michael Walzer, and others, indicate (at least to me) that the question of social order as I see it is once again alive.

But none of this comes close enough to an understanding of the problematic condition of the contemporary idea of social order to make it possible to come at some rendering of it less numbing than that offered by John Dunn and - in some of his moods - Alasdair MacIntyre.

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<sup>55</sup> J. Dunn, "The concept of 'trust' in the politics of John Locke," in *Philosophy and History*, (ed. Rorty, Schneewind & Skinner) C.U.P., 1984, p.284

<sup>56</sup> A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p.4.

<sup>57</sup> J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard Univ. Press, 1971.

<sup>58</sup> R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Basic Books, 1974.

## IV SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND INDIVIDUAL ADJUSTMENT

The notion of organisation as the action of a group in defining its own structure is best revealed in the example of 'social organisation' a term which has suffered more than most at the hands of social scientists. The most serious, and protracted, attempt at defining the term and putting it to use is Raymond Firth's. In one of his later essays, he goes to some lengths to enumerate and classify the attempts at definition by other social anthropologists. Those definitions he cites which refer in fact to organisation in general rather than to social organisation may be safely disregarded. Those put forward by Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and others are taken more seriously, but are in the end rejected because, as he sees it, they do not distinguish satisfactorily between social organisation and social structure.

This is how he ends the discussion of the definitional problem: "I do not think that a neat single-sentence definition of the concept of social organisation can be given any more than that such definitions have been successfully produced for social structure. But to begin with, one may think of social organisation in terms of ordered action. It refers to concrete social activity... ordered... in reference to socially defined ends. By such co-ordinated, orientated activity, a society is kept in being - its members kept in relation with one another. One may describe social organisation, then, as the working arrangements of society.... This ordering of social action may coincide with and support the structural features of the society, the major principles on which its form depends. But it may vary from the structural principles, and even bear against them in some particulars. Ultimately, the social structure may have to give way through a concatenation of organisational acts."<sup>59</sup>

Firth's interest in social organisation, as this passage from "Social Organization and Social Change" shows very clearly, was in using it as a way of accounting for social change. Social change, for social scientists generally, refers to changes in social structure. The trouble is that although sociologists and social anthropologists have to resort to abstract terms whenever they seek to explain or interpret their observations, the 'concrete realities' they observe are the actions and conduct of people during the events and within the circumstances of the time they are being observed. This goes for social structure no less than for social organisation. Both are systems of relationships which are inferred from the multiplicity of indications incorporated in the way individuals talk among themselves and about each other, behave towards others in different situations, and display or betray feelings towards each other in gesture, demeanour, and facial expression. It is for the observer-analyst to assign all these different components of individual conduct to 'structure' or to 'organisation'.

It so happens that the categorical distinction between the 'functioning' of society (the behaviour - actions, demeanour, and so forth - of individuals towards one another and in

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<sup>59</sup> R.Firth, "Social Organization and Social Change", in *Essays on Social Organization and Values*, Athlone Press, 1964, p.45.

the presence of others) and 'social structure' (the relationships which sections, groups and individual members of them have with each other) was taken over by nineteenth-century sociologists and social anthropologists from the usage then current in biology - the crown prince, if not the queen, of sciences as it then was. In biology, it was the self-evident and long-standing distinction between physiology and anatomy that laid the foundation for a parallel distinction between function and structure. This led to an earnest debate among biologists as to whether structure determined function or function determined structure. The debate was replicated by sociologists - and, indeed, by other social scientists, especially those influenced by marxist ideas.

For social scientists the structure-function dichotomy has persisted throughout the present century. During the last hundred years, however, biology has moved on somewhat. A suggestion by Darwin as early as 1859 to the effect that "a change in function is the key element in the solution of the problem" was taken up later on, and it became generally accepted that "the crucial factor in the acquisition of most evolutionary" [structural] "novelties is a shift in behaviour."<sup>60</sup> Raymond Firth's interpretation was not very far off - but it was a hundred years later.

In so far as any interest in the structure-function problem still remains among biologists, it seems, I believe, to be along the lines set out by J.H.Woodger some seventy years ago: there is "no such antithesis in nature. The antithesis springs solely from our modes of apprehension and from the separation" (in our ordinary thinking) "of space and time..... temporal differentiation is just as obvious and important a characteristic of the living organism as is spatial differentiation." An organism is best conceived as "a spatio-temporal structure and ... this spatio-temporal structure is the activity itself."<sup>61</sup>

It was probably Woodger's pronouncement that was in my mind when I wrote, "In so far as an organisation is a process through which individuals are enabled to produce - i.e., make what they do available to others, to socialise their work - organisation is an essential instrument for the accomplishment of their individual ends and values. As against this, in so far as organisation is a structure which allocates individuals to specific parts of the total task which the organisation exists to perform, organisation is the scriptwriter of roles to which individuals find they become committed."<sup>62</sup>

The conception of social organisation articulated by Firth was taken up and exploited by Erving Goffman. For Goffman, social organisation denotes the system of personal relationships which obtains in the family, neighbourhood, place of work, and so on. It applies to relationships between individuals, as against interaction between them, which is a matter of what he calls public order. The analysis of social interaction, which was his major interest, is a matter of identifying the rules governing the way people behave (or should behave) in each other's company.

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<sup>60</sup> E.Mayr, *The Growth of Biological Thought*, Harvard Univ. Pr., 1982, pp.610 and 611.

<sup>61</sup> J.H.Woodger, *Biological Principles*, Routledge, 1929, p.329 and p.330.

<sup>62</sup> T.Burns, *The BBC: Public Institution and Private World*, Macmillan, 1977, p.261.

It is obviously necessary to expand the operational term 'social organisation' so as to include the idea of individual adjustment. The study of social organisation concerns the significance, for himself and for others, of each individual's placement in the system of relationships in which he lives out his life. The trouble is that 'organisation' has now acquired a specificity which smacks too much of the hand - even perhaps the hidden hand - of authority and power. Having relationships with others is taken as a prescription - of varying tightness - for the way one conducts oneself in their company, and for the significance - of varying consequentiality - which other individuals will attach to such behaviour. Social organisation can therefore be regarded as the outcome of the division of social labour which distributes the entirety of the activities which define the existence of a family, a group of friends, a neighbourhood or any other collectivity among the members, and coordinates them.

In other words, as individual persons are socialised into living as members of organised groups like families, sets of friends, working organisations, and the like, they come to make assumptions about themselves and others, assumptions which set out their approved relationship with other members in terms of the collective enterprise - their rightful contribution to it and their rightful share in its consequences, bad as well as good. Social organisation therefore provides for a division of social labour, distributing the entirety of the activities which define its existence as an organised social structure among the members and coordinating them according to acknowledged rules. Many of the obligations and expectations an individual acknowledges, therefore, are bound up with the activities of a social organisation that incorporates him, and which they serve to maintain.<sup>63</sup>

The idea Goffman is trying to convey is not unlike Wittgenstein's notion of definitions deriving from rule-governed behaviour: a playing card, or a chess piece, for example, is what it is not because of its shape, size, colour and so forth, but because of the rules of the game, including those which govern potential plays, or moves. It is not a matter of the formal division of labour which obtains in industrial or administrative systems, or of the explicit allocation of specific tasks to members of a group, or a team, and their controlled coordination by a designated leader, or captain. The rules of the game for individuals in a socially organised setting see to it that their actions are expressive of what they know their social place to be in it - and, moreover, that they will stick to it.

Goffman goes on to add a new dimension to Wittgenstein's analogy, however. Using chess pieces for a game of draughts, for example, redefines their nature and their value. In much the same way, individuals might be regarded as entitled to remove themselves from their "places" in some socially organised entity, but such entitlement exists only if those remaining know, or assume, that they are shifting to some other "place" in some equally "real" organisation, such as sport, a game, place of work, or group of familiar

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<sup>63</sup> E.Goffman, "The Insanity of Place", in *Relations in Public*, Allen Lane, 1971. Interestingly, Goffman had used the term 'social structure' in precisely the same meaning and for precisely the same analytical purpose in an earlier essay: "The Underlife of a Public Institution" (*Asylums*, Anchor Books, 1961). See also T.Burns, *Erving Goffman*, Routledge, 1992, pp.174-8.

companions, i.e., to another sector of organised social life where they have also established themselves in "real" places, but where different sorts of games are being played, with different rules.<sup>64</sup>

But there is yet another dimension that Goffman adds to his conception of social organisation. Individuals do sometimes move out of their place in one established social entity and move into another which is not 'recognised' as legitimate by their former fellows, is unacceptable, or even disapproved of. After mentioning the obvious instances of delinquent behaviour, which may be met by the formal sanctioning processes of the law, by 'informal' social sanctions, or simply by breaking off association with the offender, Goffman moves on to other and more interesting outcomes. There are times and occasions when individuals who offend or defy the expectations of others around them can prevail, and so force acceptance of their behaviour in these new terms and the new definition of the situation that this implies. "Children growing up in a family are constantly engaged in this process, constantly negotiating new privileges from their keepers, privileges which soon come to be seen as the young person's due."<sup>65</sup>

This first illustration provides a miniature but precise rendering of what Firth sees in social organisation as the key to the dynamics of social change - as against the tendency that has prevailed in social anthropology and sociology of "looking on social change only in terms of breakdown, or disintegration". One could go on to add other and equally familiar examples. Children may join up with 'unsuitable' companions, or take up careers associated with a distinctly different financial or social grade from that of the rest of the family. Individuals may join groups or movements with views or practices remote from those of their former associates. People may succeed or fail in ways seen as immoderate, and so alienate themselves from, or be rejected by, the group to which they had belonged. Both the individual and the group he has left and the one he is joining have to adjust.

One can go further. Successful mutinies in schools, prisons, and ghettos illustrate the same theme - as do the social changes produced by the labour movement and the suffragette movement. Nor are displacements of this kind by any means always spontaneous, or voluntary. War, natural disaster, mass migration, and even economic booms and slumps generate displacements on the largest scale. Numbers, in this case, do count. It is when displacement happens for a sufficient number of people, and in much the same area of social life, that it is read as 'social change' - a change in the structure of society.

Social organisation, therefore, cannot be regarded, as it was by Raymond Firth, as some agency which explains why 'social change' happens in the 'social structure', any more than it should be interpreted in terms of breakdown, or disintegration. In this very general sense, it is best envisaged as the temporal perspective on a 'temporal-spatial' system, social structure representing the spatial perspective. In terms of this temporal perspective, it is rather more helpful, I think, to see social change as the outcome of the

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<sup>64</sup> E.Goffman, "The Insanity of Place", p.363

<sup>65</sup> E.Goffman, "The Insanity of Place", p.349.

accumulation of individual adjustments to personal situations to a point at which 'structural' change becomes visible, and acknowledged.

Another instance, this time more specific, of the way in which social organisation manifests itself as the outcome of an accumulation of individual adjustments, is of a group which defines its own structure in a way which is accepted and familiar, but with its significance largely unformalised - and certainly not 'organised' in the generally accepted sense. The prime instance is that of the 'community of scientists', a conception which Michael Polanyi developed in a series of publications over a period of almost thirty years and which were fairly widely discussed.

The gist of it is that although modern science covers so enormous an array of subject matter and activities that any single scientist can only understand a tiny part of it, yet, by means of a vast, complex and comprehensive network of acquaintanceship, a sort of consensus about what should be accepted as science and who should be recognised as a scientist is arrived at and maintained. The network of acquaintanceship starts with individual scientists who watch over their own fields of interest and study and adjoining areas of interest about which they are able to make reliable judgments. The network as a whole is made up incrementally this way by close and increasingly distant neighbours until it includes, in one respect, all scientists within a particular branch of science, in another respect, scientists of all kinds, first in one country and eventually world-wide. "[W]ork done on the speciality of B can be reliably judged by A and C; that of C by B and D; that of D by C and E; and so on."

A similar network of mutual and transitive appraisal applies also to the standards by which appraisals are made and to criticism. Admittedly, there are dishonest or self-deluded scientists, but the scientific community as a whole assumes - has to assume - that coherent standards prevail in every domain of science. "We have here the assumption of a cultural ideal: the ideal of a highly differentiated intellectual life within a society responsive to the intellectual passions of this elite.

The acceptance of these assumptions seals a pact of mutual confidence within the community of scientists and seals the dedication of society as a whole to the support of their scientific pursuits. This dedication takes effect in the establishment of scientific institutions, set up for the advancement of science and for its dissemination throughout society under the authority of scientific opinion."<sup>66</sup>

The community of science has its own hierarchic ordering in terms of the degree of proficiency and distinction accorded to its members by their fellows, and acknowledged by placement in the scientific institutions set up - and financed - by society. At the top, in most countries, there is an Academy (the Royal Society, in Britain), an elite recognised by both the community of scientists and society at large, the members of which control, or greatly influence (usually in consultation among themselves), "university premises,

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<sup>66</sup> M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, Routledge, 1962, pp. 217-219.

academic appointments, research grants, scientific journals and the awarding of academic degrees."<sup>67</sup>

To end with, then, we are confronted with a second paradox. It is in some ways even odder than that posed by Weber's 'great question', which was how to keep at least a portion of mankind free from 'this parcelling out of the soul, from this supreme mastery of the bureaucratic way of life', while at the same time insisting that bureaucracy was an instance of the supremacy of human reason over circumstances which created modern science and had become essential to the maintenance of civilised life. Polanyi's concern was to direct attention to the existence of a large community which has been created and organised, is maintained by and made up of, a very large body of autonomous individuals.

What we now have to account for is the presence, in this rationally bureaucratized, world of a very large international community of individuals who have organized themselves in a way which is certainly meritocratic, but with judgments being made by peers, and very different from bureaucracy, in that authority properly consists in superior knowledge, not in superior power, and who in combination represent the modern science that Weber saw as the supreme manifestation of rationality.

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<sup>67</sup> M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, p. 216.