

THE STRUCTURALIST IDEA OF THE STATE IN MARX AND ENGELS

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摘 要

馬克思主義對國家觀點的理解有許多方式。本文僅提供讀者一種主要的馬克思主義國家理念，此即結構主義國家觀。本文試圖由三方面加以檢視此一觀點：（一）基礎與上層建築；（二）生產方式與國家；（三）作為特殊生產關係物質凝聚物的國家。此三方面並無不協調處，而是馬克思主義結構國家觀的三個不同面向。分析之後，作者將在文末對馬克思及恩格斯在建構馬克思主義的結構主義國家觀上能呈現的複雜性及理論上的弱點提出批評。

Abstract

There are many ways in which the idea of the state can be understood in Marxism. This essay intends to provide the readers one of the major Marxist ideas of the state, i.e. the structuralist idea of the state in Marxism. Three related perspectives are examined in this essay: (1) base and superstructure; (2) the mode of production and the state; (3) the state as the specific material condensation of the relations of production. The three perspectives are not inconsistency, but different perspectives of the same idea of the state in Marxism. At the end, the author also makes some critical remarks on Marx's and Engels' complexity and theoretical weaknesses in the reconstruction of a structuralist idea of the state in Marxism.

*Keywords: Marxism, Base and Superstructure, Mode of Production, the State.

Base and Superstructure

As the author concluded in "the Instrumentalist Idea of the State in Marx and Engels" (Chiang, 1992:167-193), the major deficiency of the instrumentalist idea of the state in Marx's and Engels' thought was that it took for granted a simple causal relation between the facts of class domination and the state. If the state was simply an instrument of class rule, then it was necessary to explain how the dominant mode of production was successfully reproduced when the economically ruling class did not actually occupy the position of state power.

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In examining the development of the ideas of the state in Marx, we found that Marx, in his *Manuscripts of 1844*, had noted that "religion, the family, the state, law, morality, science, art, etc. are only particular forms of production and come under its general law" (Bottomore, 1964:156). However, he never explained the "forms of production" in detail in the *Manuscripts*. Marx and Engels focused their study on the impersonal, structural, and historical-materialist natures of the state in *The German Ideology* (1845-46). It is evident that, by adopting an empirical, historical-materialistic approach, they developed a structuralist idea of the state in *The German Ideology* and gradually transcended, not abolished, the instrumentalist idea of the state.

The difference between the empirical and the metaphysical approach to politics was revealed in the opposing definitions Hegel and Marx gave of the state, and in the contrary functions they assigned to it in relation to society. For Hegel, as we noted before, the state was the realization of the ethical idea and concrete freedom. It was logically primary to society, the condition of all societal life (Knox, 1967: 155-56). For Marx, as he claimed in *The German Ideology*, the state was a product of social life, not its condition. It was a historical outgrowth of society. There were societies without states, according to Marx, therefore the society must be logically and historically prior to the state. Society was the "totality of existence" in which the state functions as a principle of "organization" (Marx and Engels, 1967:107). Thus, as it is evident in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels did not treat mostly the state as a simple "instrument" in the hands of the ruling class. Rather, the state can be understood as an expression of the internal-structural function of a society, or the social formation.

The fundamental thesis of the structuralist idea of the state in Marx's and Engels' thoughts was that the functions of the state are broadly determined by the very structures of the society rather than merely by the wills and/or actions of the dominant class (Gold, Lo, and Wright, 1975:30). The concept of "structure" was constantly used by Marxist-structuralist writers, but rarely explicitly defined. In Historical Materialism, "structure" was not applied to the concrete social institutions that made up a society, but rather to the systematic functional interrelationships among these institutions. Maurice Godelier (1967:97) provided a succinct statement of the Marxist principles of structural analysis:

first, that the structure is part of reality, but not of visible social relations, and second, that the study of the internal functioning of a structure must precede and illuminate the study of its genesis and evolution.

Also Godelier (1973:336) stated it in this way:

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For Marx, as for Claude Levi-Strauss, 'structure' should not be confused with visible 'social relations.' The logic of the latter, and the laws of social practice more generally, depend on the functioning of these hidden structures and the discovery of these should allow us to 'account for all the facts observed.'

Therefore, the key point of the structuralist analysis of the state in Marx and Engels was an examination of the social structure within a society, particularly the contradictions rooted in the economy. It was also an approach to unravel the internal relations between the infrastructure and the superstructure, from which we can see how the economic base conditioned the legal-political superstructure, and how the legal-political superstructure reacted to the base. By Marxian structuralism, these internal relations determined the specific policies and organization of the state, and they were the "objective relations." Poulantzas (1969:73) provided us an explanation of it:

the 'direct' participation of members of the capitalist class in the State apparatus and in the government, even where it exists, is not the important side of the matter. The relation between the bourgeois class and the State is an 'objective relation.' This means that if the 'function' of the State in a determinate social formation and the 'interest' of the dominant class in this formation 'coincide,' it is by reason of the system itself: the direct participation of members of the ruling class in the State apparatus is not the 'cause' but the 'effect,' and moreover a chance and contingent one, of this objective coincidence.

Indeed, for Marx and Engels, the relation between the bourgeois class and the state was an "objective relation." This "objective relation" was embedded in the internal-social structure of a society which could not be understood without analyzing Marx's model of base and superstructure.

The first formation of Marx's and Engels' structuralist idea of the state in *The German Ideology* and *The Poverty of philosophy* (1847) was firmly grounded in the Saint-Simonist views of society and history. Marx shared, in particular, with Saint-Simonists the assumption that the production of the means of subsistence is the basic fact to be taken into account in any analysis of social life. Marx argued that men began to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they began to produce their means of subsistence, and then they used the means of production to produce. By

producing their means of subsistence and exchanging the things they produced, they were producing their material life and then constructing their social life and political life. In other words, Marx believed that man's life is based on his economic needs. It is fundamental to his interpretation of the sphere of society. For he held that all institutions and all thoughts and philosophy are a "superstructure" erected upon, and in the long run dependent upon, the social conditions of existence. Therefore, Marx in *The German Ideology* argued:

This material life of individuals.... is the real basis of the state and remains so at all the stages at which division of labour and private property are still necessary... these actual relations are in no way created by the state power; on the contrary, they are the power creating it (MECW, 5, 1976:329).

This conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real process of production, starting out from the material production of life itself, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this mode of production as the basis of all history; and to show it in its action as State, to explain all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics etc. etc., and trace their origins and growth from that basis; by which means, of course, the whole thing can be depicted in its totality (McLellan, 1988: 10-11).

This brings us to the primary view that the material life of human beings in history is the base of the state and other social formations. Marx concluded this idea in his letter to P.V. Annenkov, dated December 28, 1846:

The social history of man is never anything but the history of their individual development, whether they are conscious of it or not. Their material relations are the basis of all their relations. These material relations are only the necessary forms in which the material and individual activity is realized (Simelser, 1873:4).

Therefore, Marx concluded that:

This mode of production should not be regarded simply as the reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. It is already a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite way of expressing their life, a definite 'mode of life' (Bottomore, 1983:51).

The authority regarding the concept of mode of production was presented in his

famous Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), and is worth quoting at some length.

My investigation led to the result that legal relations as well as forms of state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather are rooted in the material conditions of life.... In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society-- the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life conditions the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or-- what is but a legal expression for the same thing--with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic-- in short ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of and individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must rather be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production (McLellan, 1988:19-20).

In this passage, Marx's primary structuralist idea of the state was deeply colored with and economic, reductionalist and "determinist" version (Habermas, 1979:143:

Stojanovic, 1981:29). That was not surprising to us, since in the 1850s Marx was deeply impressed with the results of the natural sciences and took them to be the paradigm for his study of society and history. At the same time, he was also still influenced by Hegel's strict historical determinism.

However, if Marx's model of base-superstructure is understood as a metaphor drawn from architecture, it is a misunderstanding of Marx's very nature of the structuralist idea of the state. Only the "vulgar" Marxism saw the base "determining" the superstructure; the internal relations among the elements in the model were "one-way support." What were the particular relations between the infrastructure and the superstructure, between the "economic structure of society" and its political, juridical and ideological reality in Marxian structuralist sense? As K. Korsch argued, Marx did not use the word "determination" to describe the relations between the base and the superstructure. Rather, he said that "the mode of production in material life conditions (*bedingt*) the general character of the social, political and spiritual process of life" (McLellan, 1988:19; Korsch, 1963:214-29). In fact, Marx's ideas were characterized as dialectical (Rader, 1979:15-20).

Furthermore, Marx in his later years gradually modified his crude version. the truth was that in his concrete investigation of societies, phenomena and events, Marx transcended his determinist scheme. Faced with the complexity of historical life, the scheme had to yield. Into his initial formula concerning the relationship between the forces of production and the relations of production, and between the economic base and the social superstructure, Marx introduced a series of retrospective modifications and clarifications. Engels noted that and declared it in his letter to Joseph Bloch, dated September 21-22, 1890:

Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that younger writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasize this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place, or the opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into their rights (MESC, 1942:477).

According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction in real life.... The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure.... also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggle... There is an interaction of all these elements, in which ... the "economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary..". (MESC, 1942:475).

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Here, we get the following point: both Marx and Engels tried to reconstruct their structuralist conception.

The modified view of Marx's structuralist idea of the state was derived from "the individual is the social being" (Bottomore, 1964:158). Marx was no less opposed to the dualism of man and nature. A human being was what he was because of his internal relations to the natural as well as the human environment. Nature shared a common essence with man. Marx argued this early in his *Manuscripts*:

To say that man 'lives' from nature means that nature is his 'body' with which he must remain in a continuous interchange in order not to die. The statement that the physical and mental life of man, and nature, are interdependent means simply that nature is interdependent with itself, for man is part of nature (Bottomore, 1964:127).

In this passage, Marx thought of man and nature in terms of structures of organic wholeness. The psycho-physical individual was an organic structure; by the same token, the social formation (e.g., society and the state) was a wider structure. Here, in Marx's dialectic, this social formation was not a single organic unity, but rather the internal relatedness of a thing-in-itself.

Furthermore, Marx clearly indicated the relevance of organic totality to his historical inquiry. In his Preface to the first edition of *Das Kapital* (1867), he remarked that "the present society is no solid crystal, but an organism capable of change, and it is constantly changing" (Marx, 1967:xiii). In *The Grundrisse*, he also characterized bourgeois society as an organic system:

While in the completed bourgeois system every economic relation presupposes every other in its bourgeois economic form, and everything posited is thus also a presupposition, this is the case with every organic system. Thus organic system itself, as a totality has its presuppositions, and its development to its totality consists precisely in subordinating all elements of society to itself, or in creating out of it the organs which it still lacks. This is historically how it becomes a totality (Marx, 1973:278).

Thus, the society for Marx was not a mere arithmetical sum of separate and distinct parts but a configuration of interdependent elements. There was a total functional integration in which each element was what it was because of its relations to the other elements and to the whole. Each entailed and was entailed by the other

elements. In a word, Marx treated the mode of production as the 'cell-from,' or a 'womb,' or a 'matrix' of social formation.

The organic structure view was also presented in Marx's *Theories of Surplus Value* (1863), where he stated that production was caught upon a web of internal relations.

All circumstances....which affect man, the subject of production, have a greater or lesser influence upon all his functions and activities, including his functions and activities as the creator of material wealth, of commodities. In his sense, it can truly be asserted that all human relations and functions, however and wherever they manifest themselves, influence material production and have a more or less determining effect upon it (Bottomore and Rubel, 1956:100).

This passage clearly indicated that outside of this "matrix" of internally related parts of the elements would lose their identity.

Generally speaking, those are the formulations by virtue of which the burden of deterministic dependence and primacy is reduced. This outcome was reached in three senses. First, the causal concept yielded to a functional one. Second, "reciprocal effects" were increasingly cited, and even "mutually conditioning." Third, there was a considerable expansion of the temporal and spatial segment of history to which the scheme related. Thus the notion of "determinism" was inadequate to meet Marx's reconstruction of a base-superstructure model.

In short, Marx's mature structuralist notion, as Althusser (1969) put it, was no longer a notion of a base "determining" the superstructure; instead the economic, political and even ideological levels consisted of specific practices, which together formed a structured totality, a social formation. In other words, according to Nozick (1974:273), the mode of production included how production is organized and directed, and therefore "even if the theory were correct which holds that there is a substructure which uniquely determines a superstructure, it doesn't follow that parts of the superstructure aren't independently justifiable." And also as Althusser (1968) put it, Marx's crude notion of structuralist interpretation of the model of base-superstructure was replaced by his political economy perspective - the notion of an organic-structural causality. This mature notion is very important for us in understanding how the dominant mode of production was successfully reproduced when the economically ruling class did not actually occupy the key position of state power. That is, the organic totality version retained the strength to explain how the state can react to its economic system,

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and finally become a “relative autonomous reality.”

Within the political economy perspective the fundamental motifs of the structuralist idea of the state in Marxism were formed. These can be summarized as follows:

(1)The model of base-superstructure is an abstract-formal object, referring not to a particular form of economic organization, but to a particular set of relationships, a matrix of structures, institutions, and relations. This matrix it contains two basic units, and these units are “social” in character. These units stand in some kind of consistent, or “systematic” relation to one another. The matrix should have some “integrity.” Thus the mode of production can be seen as a social matrix or a social system.

(2)For constructing a certain mode of production, base and superstructure are two essential parts: Here, the base is the real foundation of the superstructure. It is the basis “on which rise a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.” That is, it is the material conditions of life which form the basis of all social and political structures, as well as of human consciousness. In this interpretation, every society is divided into substructures that can be hierarchically placed in the order: economic sphere, legal-political sphere, social sphere, and ideological sphere. The theorem then states that processes in any higher substructures are determined, in the sense of causal dependency, by processes in the substructures below it. Briefly put, the economic system determines “in the final analysis” as Engels stated it, the scope of the developments possible in other substructures. It is in this context that the state was not to be understood as arising from human conscious intention. The state reflected the social relations, or the relations of production, which took place at the economic base of society.

(3)Marx advanced the hypothesis of the necessary existence of correspondences between the forces of production and the relations of production, and as a result of this, between the infrastructure and the superstructure. In this sense, the whole of social life in terms of “structure” not only exists as a correspondence both between forces and relations, but also exists as a correspondence between the relations of production and legal, political, ideological and other social relations.

(4)There is a power of contradiction between relations and forces to act as the motor of history. Thus, “at a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production...within which they have been at work hitherto”; and “from forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters,” thereby initiating social revolution. That is, the development of the forces of production may lead to a contradiction with the relations of production, and the intensification of this

contradiction necessarily leads to the breakdown of the existing modes of production and their superstructure.

Consequently, after discussing the mode of production, a core thesis regarding the concept of the state emerges. In the model of base-superstructure, the state and its legal and political institutions are clearly superstructure for Marx. Its fundamental character was determined by the nature of the existing economic system. However, within this social “matrix,” the material base, or economic system, and the social and political system are related; the changes in the material stratum produced corresponding changes in the superstructure; the changes in the superstructure also relatively affected the infrastructure.

The Mode of Production and the State

The “base,” in Marx’ sociohistorical ontology, contained two elements: the forces of production and the relations of production. Historically, as Marx argued in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, relations of production corresponded to a definite state of development of the material productive forces. Therefore,

no social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself (McLellan, 1988:20).

Following this logic, it seems likely that the development of various forces of production yielded different forms of relations of production. Different forces and relations of production yielded different modes of production from which rise different forms of the state. Thus Marx further argued:

In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production - antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism, but of one arising from the social condition of life of the individuals; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions

for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the prehistory of human society to a close (McLellan, 1988:20).

This passage indicates that Marx's account of the mode of production comprised both a "synchronic" and "diachronic" analysis. For Marx, the synchronic was an analysis of the structure that remained fairly constant throughout history. The diachronic was the analysis of historical development into temporal stages. In the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, there were more enduring structural characteristics - the base with its interaction of man and nature and its dialectical interplay of the forces and relations of production, and the superstructure with its divisions between the political-legal and the cultural components. On the other hand, there were the stages of historical development.

However, Marx and Engels also suggested that the mode of production could be seen as the form of ownership. In *The German Ideology*, they distinguished between the earliest form of tribal property, the communal state property of the ancient city, which evolved into a mode of production based on slavery, and the feudal form of property, based on an enserfed peasantry paying rent to the nobility. Each of these social forms corresponded to a specific stage in the evaluation of the productive forces and the social division of labour. Marx and Engels argued:

The different stages of development of the division of labour are only so many different forms of property, i.e. each stage of the division of labour also determines the relations of individuals to one another in reference to the materials, instruments and products of labour (MECW, 5, 1976:32).

Thus, in this work Marx and Engels mentioned that in history there were "tribal ownership," "ancient communal and state ownership," "feudal or estate ownership," and "capitalist ownership." In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), and *The Grundrisse* (1857), Marx even fused the form of property into the mode of production. Under this construct, he further analyzed the whole of human past and future into a series of different forms of ownership. For example, in *The Grundrisse*, in discussion of the communal system, Marx suggested that:

The relation to the earth as property is always mediated through the peaceful or violent occupation of the land by the tribe, by the community in some more or less naturally occurring or already historically developed form...

the real existence of the community is determined by the specific form of its ownership of the objective conditions of labour. Whether membership in a community appears as “communal property”, where the individual is only the possessor and there is no private property in land and soil; or whether it appears in the dual form of the state and private property existing alongside each other, but in such a way that the former is a precondition of the latter, and only the citizen is and must be a private proprietor... or whether, finally, communal property appears only as a complement to private property, with the latter as its basis... If the community as such is to continue in the old way, the reproduction of its members in the presupposed objective conditions is necessary. Production itself... destroys instead of reproducing them, etc., and so the communal system declines and falls, along with the property relations on which it was based (Bottomore, 1983:56).

Here obviously Marx thought that a given form of property was the foundation of the communal society's economic structure, and this form of property seemed to be identified with the mode of production. Let us briefly examine the role of the state within the different forms of the mode of production:

(1) The Primitive Society. It was the first form of society in human history. Its ownership was called tribal ownership. According to Marx's argument in *The German Ideology*, it corresponded to the underdeveloped state of production. The division of labour was at this stage very elementary and was confined to a further extension of the natural division of labour existing in the family. The social structure was limited to an extension of the family, patriarchal family chieftains, and below them the members of the tribe. That is, as Engels described in his *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), in the primitive society, there was a tribal council for the common affairs of the tribe. It was composed of all the “sachems” and war-chiefs of the different gens, who were genuinely representative because they could be disposed of at any time. It held its deliberations in public, surrounded by the other members of the tribe, who had the right to join freely in the discussion and to make their views heard. The decision rested with the council (Engels, 1942:82). In short, in the primitive society, the permanent authority was the “council.” There was no formal law, but the “gentile constitution.” There was an absence of private property, thus there was an absence of classes and class antagonism, and also an absence of the state. There was a primitive communism, all were equal and free (McLellan, 1988:5; Engels, 1942:32-43, 86-87).

(2) The Asiatic Mode of Production. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels

did not develop the concept of the Asiatic mode of production. However, we can derive this mode from their writings on India and China. The central feature of this mode of production was a situation where the peasant producers were not confronted by a private landowner, but rather were subordinated to the state. This mode in Marx' and Engels' view was outside of the European context and was a completely different style of society.

Marx and Engels certainly claimed in general that the Asiatic form of property relations is determined by a specific form of development of the productive forces and the division of labor:

In the last instance the community and the property resting upon it can be reduced to a specific stage in the development of the forces of production of the laboring subjects – to which correspond specific relations of these subjects with each other and with nature... Property...and this applies to its Asiatic, Slavonic, ancient classical and Germanic forms - therefore originally signifies a relation of the working (producing) subject (or a subject reproducing himself) to the conditions of production or reproduction as his own. "Hence according to the conditions of production, property will take different forms" (Marx, 1975:95).

The Asiatic mode of production arose in areas heavily dependent upon irrigation. Social elements were the communal village, on the one hand, and the state and its personnel, on the other. In this mode, since the basic population was a peasantry inhabiting lands made fertile by irrigation, naturally, the expensive irrigation systems required the cooperation of the population and their integration under a governing authority. Marx became interested in an analysis of the Asiatic mode of production in 1853. In his letter to Engels, June 2, 1853, Marx described the Oriental states as follows:

The king is the sole and only proprietor of all the land in the kingdom... Bernier rightly considers that the basic form of all phenomena in the east... is to be found in the fact that no private property in land existed. That is the real key, even to the Oriental heaven (MESC, 1942:65-66).

On June 6, 1853, Engels wrote to Marx:

An Oriental government never had more than three departments: finance (plunder at home), war (plunder at home and abroad), and public works

(provision for reproduction) (MESC, 1942:67).

Marx noted the importance of public works for the Asian state and stressed the coexistence of self-sufficient villages with them, when he wrote back to Engels on June 14, 1853:

The stationary character of this part of Asia... is fully explained by two circumstances which supplement each other: (1) the public works which were the business of the central governments; (2) besides this the whole empire, not counting the few larger towns, was divided into villages, which possessed a completely separate organization and formed a little world in themselves... (MESC, 1942:70).

During the same period, Marx and Engels presented a series of articles for the *New York Daily Tribune* discussing the Oriental states. In the article "The British Rule in India" (1853), Marx argued:

Climate and territorial conditions... constituted artificial irrigation by canals and waterworks, the basis of Oriental agriculture... This prime necessity of an economical and common use of water... necessitated in the Orient, where civilization was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of Government. Hence an economical function devolved upon all Asiatic Governments, the function of providing public works (Marx and Engels, 1960:33).

On the basis of these sources, Marx and Engels concluded that the absence of private property, particularly private ownership of land, and the public irrigation works were a basic determinant of centralized despotic states, with a monopoly of land in Asia.

On the other hand, in *The Grundrisse* (1857-8), Marx placed special emphasis on the communal ownership of land. He saw that autarchic villages were the real basis of social unity represented by the state. In other words, he believed that the static nature of Asiatic society depended on the coherence of the ancient village communities which were economically self-sufficient. These communities were, for geographic and climatic reasons, dependent on irrigation which required a centralized administrative apparatus to coordinate and develop large scale hydraulic works. Despotism was thus

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explained by the dominant role of the state in public works and the self-sufficiency and isolation of the village communities.. Thus, the state in the Orient concealed a tribal-communal ownership of self-sustaining villages which were the socio-economic reality behind the “imaginary unity” of the title of the despotic sovereign to land. Marx argued in his *The Grundrisse*:

The “all embracing unity” which stands above all these small commune bodies may appear as the higher or “sole proprietor,” the real communities only as “hereditary” possessors... The despot here appears as the father of all the numerous lesser communities, thus realizing the common unity of all. It therefore follows that the surplus product belongs to this highest unity (Marx, 1973:472-3).

In short, the Oriental states, e.g. China, India, Persia, Turkey, Hindustan, consisted of an absolute monarch and a bureaucracy, whose functions were simply irrigation, taxation and war. That is, within the Asiatic mode of production, the form of the state was the “absolutist state”; the political system was the centralized bureaucratic autocracy, and the ideological superstructure was “Oriental Despotism” (Wittfogel, 1957; Anderson, 1979).

(3) The Ancient Mode of Production. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels clearly suggested that this mode existed in Greece and Rome. This ancient mode was characterized by ancient communal and state ownership. Besides communal ownership, at that period, there was also immovable private property ownership. However, historically, more than one mode of production may subsist within any actual social formation. But in the Introduction to *The Grundrisse* Marx (1973:19) maintained that “in all forms of society there is one determinate kind of production which assigns ranks and influence to all the others.” Thus, private property ownership can be seen as an abnormal form subordinate to communal ownership. In the ancient society, the citizens held power over their laboring slaves only in their community, and on this account alone, therefore, they were involved in a form of communal ownership. It was, Marx emphasized, the communal private property which compelled the active citizens to remain in this derived form of possession over their slaves from which developed the ancient class relations (McLellan, 1988:5).

In *The Grundrisse*, Marx (1973:471-96) saw the ancient mode of production as one of the forms which preceded capitalist production. There Marx identified Germanic, ancient and Slavonic forms of property and production as other routes out of primitive

communism and as alternatives to the Asiatic; he held that both slavery and serfdom were “always secondary, derived, never original, although a necessary and logical result of property founded on the community and labor in the community.”

A clear discussion of the rise of ancient society and the state was presented in chapter five of Engels’ *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), where Engels argued that as certain primitive communistic societies improved their technological means of production, a substantial economic surplus was created, because people were able to produce more than their immediate subsistence and reproductive needs required. In turn, the accumulation of economic surplus and the unequal distribution of wealth resulted in private property. Over time, Engels further argued, the economic surplus, coupled with continuing advances in subsistence technology, resulted in a multiple division of labor, increasing centralized control over the means of production, and the concentration of economic wealth in the hands of a few. This division of labor and the rise of private property finally resulted in “the cleavage of society into classes.” In such conditions, the “gentile constitution” was helpless, the society fell into contradictions. The new group formed by private property and the division of labor at that time had to create new organs to look after their interests, thus the communal society “was replaced by the state” (Engels, 1942:102, 153-154). That is, the state arose from the division of labor, the existence of private property, and the class struggle. In this sense, the state’s character for Engels was repressive. The repressive state attended to the political buttressing of this kind of society, erecting a structure to preserve the class interests of the rich. The succession of states which culminated in modern types of state apparatus followed the pattern of “ancient” to “feudal” to “bourgeois” (Engels, 1942:145).

(4) The Feudal Mode of Production. This mode was seen by Marx and Engels as intermediate, chronologically and logically, between the slave society of the ancient world and the capitalist society in the modern era. Marx and Engels identified the feudal mode of production as the feudal or estate property ownership. In history, the societies of the Middle Ages were characterized by the feudal mode of production. According to Marx and Engels, the last centuries of the declining Rome Empire and its conquest by the barbarians destroyed a number of productive forces; agriculture declined, industry decayed for want of a market, trade died out, and the rural and urban population decreased.

From these conditions and the mode of organization of the conquest determined by them, feudal property developed under the influence of the Germanic military constitution. Like tribal and communal ownership, it was based again on a community, but the social structure was characterized by the hierarchical structure of landownership.

which contained landlords, armed bodies of retainers, and ensured small peasantry. the property-holding by the feudal landowners was through the “fief.” The relation of production in the feudal mode of production was based on a special character of the form of labor and the form of landed property, i.e. it was based on the “lord-vassal relationship” which was produced from the “fief.” The appropriation of surplus value by the feudal landowners was “feudal rent.” The level of feudal rent was determined by the ability of the feudal ruling class to exercise non-economic forms of compulsion in the extraction of rent. The non-economic power was exercised primarily through jurisdiction. The right to hold a court for their vassals was the main way in which lords exercised power in feudal society. The court was also an administrative organ for levying taxes and raising military forces. Although jurisdiction was political and the means by which landowners extracted surplus from peasants was also political, however, they were established by the feudal relations of production.

Again, this feudal system of landownership had its counterpart in the towns in the shape of cooperative property, i.e. the feudal organization of trades, which through about the guilds. The gradually accumulated small capital of individual craftsmen evolved into the relation of journeymen and apprentices. In short, the chief form of property ownership within the feudal mode of production consisted, on the one hand, of landed property with serf labour chained to it, and, on the other, of the labour of the individual with small capital commanding the labour of organization. The organization of both was determined by the restricted condition of production - the small-scale and primitive cultivation of the land and the craft type of the industry, from which rose the feudal states, namely the medieval states.

In European history, according to Engels, the three important feudal states were Germany, northern France and England. They carried over into the feudal state a genuine piece of “gentile constitution,” in the form of “mark” communities, thus giving the peasants and/or the medieval serfdom a local center of solidarity and a means of resistance. In these feudal states, the landed nobility was the ruling class, they had a monarch as their head who held the state’s power in his hand (McLellan, 1988:6-7; Engels, 1942:143).

(5) The Capitalist Mode of Production. This mode was discussed in detail by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, where they argued that the modern bourgeois society sprouted from the ruins of feudal society. “From the serf of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed” (McLellan, 1988:1). In this work, they further argued that this mode was derived from the development of modern industrial productive forces. The development of modern industry with the discovery

of America and the rounding of the Cape established the world market, for example, the East Indian and Chinese Markets for exchange, which opened up fresh grounds for the rising bourgeoisie. This new market gave an immense impetus to commerce, to navigation, and also gave a new impulse to industry. Thereby, “the bourgeoisie developed and increased its capital, pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages” (McLellan, 1988:21-22).

In brief, in the bourgeois mode of production, the character of production was for sale rather than for use by producers. The market existed, where labor power, under the logic of capitalism, was bought and sold, whereas workers in the process of production and exchange became the nonpossessors. Conversely, the capitalists controlled the means of production and the production process, thus becoming the possessors. Therefore, the bourgeois society as a whole split up into two great hostile camps, two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat (McLellan, 1988:21). “The bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway.” whereupon it even created “a (capitalist) world after its own image” (McLellan, 1988:23-4).

After discussing the modes of production, we may argue that Marx and Engels considered the state as a superstructure which was established upon the material condition or economic systems of a society, and, at the same time, it was also embedded in the property ownership and the social class relations. In this context, the state can be seen as non-existent before the existence of private property and the rise of social class, and unnecessary when private property and social classes have disappeared and communism has been attained.

The State as the Specific Material Condensation of the Relations of Production

In the description and analysis of the internal logic between the state and society, the two concepts of the relations between production and economically social class are the most significant, since Marx considered that political power was derived from the relations of production, and economic structure was the key to the understanding of the very nature of social and political powers.

For Marx, the “scientific understanding” of the state resided in the discovery of the internal structure hidden behind the visible functioning of a society. The internal “structure” behind the visible functioning of a social system consisted of the relations of production. Marx described it in his Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of*

Political Economy:

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will: these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society - the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness (McLellan, 1988:19).

In the above passage, it is evident that it was socio-economic relations, constituting the economic structure of society, which Marx considered to be the “real foundation” of society, and which played a primary role in determining society’s legal and political “superstructure.” Thus, although Marx held that the forces of production constituted the “basis of social organization,” it was the system of the relations of production which formed the economic structure of society from which other social phenomena were to be understood.

The state was, in this sense, not to be understood as arising from human conscious intention, but as reflecting the dominant relations of production which took place at the economic base of society. And, similarly, in reference to the ideological superstructure, Marx declared in *The German Ideology*:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling “material force” of society is at the same time its ruling “intellectual force.” The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it... (Marx and Engels, 1967:39).

Initially, the relations of production, or the internal relations of society, were a category of Marx’s sociohistorical ontology (Gould, 1981). This ontology was mainly concerned with individuals, relations and the development of community. The starting point for Marx’s sociohistorical ontology was the discussion of the condition of individuals. Marx in *The German Ideology* defined men as the “real individual.” All human history was the existence of living human individuals, and the fundamental entities that compose society were individuals in “social relations,” i.e. “relations of production.” Marx in his *The Grundrisse* (1857) also claimed:

Universally developed individuals, whose social relation, as their own

communal relations, are hence also subordinated to their own communal control, are not products of nature, but of history (Marx, 1973:162).

Obviously, these “social relations” for Marx, were “internal relations” within a society, or “relations of production” within a mode of production. In other words, internal relations were those in which the individuals were dominated objectively by them.

In his understanding of social relations as internal relations, Marx adopted some of the main features of Hegel’s analysis of internal relations, namely, the “master-slave” dialectic in *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807). According to the common interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy of internal relations, everything was internally related to everything else. Following this, as Hegel argued, the subordination of the slave was as essential to the constitution of the master *qua* master as the domination of the master was essential to the constitution of the slave *qua* slave. In Hegel’s terms, the internal relations were phenomenological, in the sense that the relation consisted of the conscious recognition of the other in a certain role and of oneself in relation to this role. This internally can be also seen in the logic of the concept of domination and subordination in that these terms were dependent on each other for their meaning (Hegel, 1969; Wallace, 1971:173-74). Thus, the term “domination” entailed a relationship between the one who dominates and the one who was dominated.

For Marx, as for Hegel, the individual’s internal relations were each changed when the relations changed. However, we would argue that, although Marx made use of Hegel’s logic of internal relations, he transformed it in a historical-materialistic way. that is, Marx regarded the individuals as wholly interconstituted by these relations when they entered into a certain mode of social system, or mode of production. In other words, although Marx viewed these individuals as independently real, yet once those individuals entered into a certain mode of production, they came into being as a result of their relations of production, and did not exist apart from their relations of production. In this sense, the existence of modes of production was the ontological presupposition of these relations into which they enter.

The notion of relations of production designated the functions among individuals and groups in the production process. It was naturally bound up with the relationship of human beings to land, tools, and other conditions of production. In other words, the relations of production were closely connected with private property. If production relations were associated with property relations, then we might think, for instance, that a landlord could charge his tenant rent because he owned the land the tenant was using. His ownership of the land indicated that he had a claim on the tenant, and the tenant was required to comply with this claim.

Similarly, in the logic of property relations, capital was, on the one hand, a thing, but on the other hand was also a “social relationship.” i.e. and intangible reality. It must inevitably disappear when presented in the tangible forms of raw materials, tools, money, etc.. This concealment was, according to Marx, not due to the inability of consciousness to “perceive” this structure, but to the structure itself. In this sense, as Marx argued, “to define bourgeois property is nothing other than to explain all the social relations of bourgeois production” and “every social relation can be presented as an example of property relation” (MECW. 5, 1976:298).

For Marx, the relations of production were constituted by the economic ownership of productive forces which established the economic class structure. In *Das Kapital*, the essential and defining principle of the economic structure was its ruling-class pattern. That is, the effective ownership of most of society’s means of production was held by a small part of that society, the ruling class. The effective ownership of few or none of society’s means of production was held by the large majority of that society, the workers (Marx, 1, 1965:235). In other words, the ruling-class pattern of the economic structure, whatever its specific form, rendered the nonowning majority dependent for their survival on the “small part of society who possesses the monopoly of the means of production” (Marx, 1, 1965:235). Hence, the ruling classes were in the position, through their monopoly of the means of production, to extract payment, or surplus-value, from the nonowning members of society in the process of exchange and production. In the volume three of *Capital*, Marx suggested:

The specific economic form (economic structure), in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers... the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers... reveals the most secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure (Marx, 3, 1954A:791).

This passage indicates that, in an economic structure, members of the ruling class owned enough productive forces which could be construed as the basis of the dominant social relations. The economic structure was, then, the ruling-class pattern of the totality of the relations of production. Above the economic structure, as Marx put it, stood the state, or “the legal and political superstructure.” The important point is that both the state and ideology relate to the economic structure of society in a similar manner. “From the specific form of material production arises in the first place a specific structure of society, in the second place a specific relation of men to nature. Their state and their spiritual outlook is determined by both” (Marx, 1969:285).

Indeed, Marx referred to the economic structure as the basis of the state and the rest of superstructure.

Marx's general distinction between the economic structure and the legal-political superstructure was the following. On the one hand, the state involved formal "rights" and "obligations"; whereas the economic structure involved effective "powers" and "constraints" (Marx and Engels, 1964B:352-359). On the other hand, the state was the "de jure representative of the general interest"; whereas the economic structure was the "de facto organization of particular material interest" (Marx and Engels, 1964B:45-6, 78). The first reason was that the legal and political superstructure arose in whole and in part only upon already existing antagonisms of material interest inherent in the economic structure (Marx, 1966:151). In other words, as Marx concluded, "in the existing organization of society the state is the active, self conscious, and official expression" of the economic structure of a society (Easton and Guddat, 1967:350). And, furthermore, if there were no such systematic antagonisms of material interest inherent in the economic structure, then there would be no legal and political superstructure required to preside over such divisions. In other words, there was no state before the ruling-class ownership of the forces of production came into being, by the same token, if the necessary material foundation of the state would no longer exist, then it would "wither away."

Second, as Marx suggested in *Capital*, since men cannot live on the content of the legal and political superstructure, whereas they can and did live on the productive-force content of the relations of production, or economic structure, they acted in accordance with the latter rather than the former. As explained by Marx,

material interests preponderate... the Middle Ages could not live on Catholicism, nor the ancient world on politics. On the contrary, it is the mode in which they gained a livelihood that explains why here politics and there Catholicism played the chief part (Marx, 1, 1965:82).

In so far as men acted in accordance with their relations to the material means of human life rather than their relations to the stuff of law and politics as such, the relations of production, or economic structure were more "basic" than the legal and political superstructure.

At this point, we can conclude that the state, or the legal and political superstructure, arose from the antagonisms of material interest inherent in the economic structure. And only in this sense, can the state be seen as the indispensable "mask" and "weapon" protecting the ruling class's economic hegemony; its existence as such

required its control by the ruling class to sustain this hegemony.

In short, for Marx, the concept of the relations of production did not refer to the technological relations connecting various human and/or nonhuman forces or production to one another. Rather, the relations of production were extratechnical relations akin to property relations. i.e. the class relations. They also can be defined as the relations of a person to a force of production, i.e. the relations of division of labour, in which he either has the power to use or exploit it, or he can be excluded from doing so. For this reason, the relations of production were actually associated with the relations between classes.

Obviously, property relations and class relations can be seen as the two aspects of the relations of production. At a given time, those who owned the property needed in the processes of production constituted one class, and those who did not own it formed another. Thus, the possession of the means of production placed the owners in a position of power in relation to the nonowning workers. In this context, the ownership of property, or of the means of production, not only bestowed liberty on the owner, but also invested him with power in relation to the nonpossessor. Therefore, the relations of production were defined mainly as the relations of economic control, or the power of ownership. Here, it might be said that relations of production are more “real,” “basic,” or “essential” than legal or political relations because they involved “powers” and the latter involved merely “rights.”

For Marx, the power based on ownership of the means of production was not only a economic power, but was also political power, since, according to Dahrendorf, “economic power is *eo ipso* political power” (Jordan, 1971:57). In other words, political power was a direct result of economic forces. In this sense, Marx assumed that political power was not autonomous and that the question of who governs or gains the upper hand in the struggle for power was not decided solely by imaginary or real rights, ideals, tactical ability or determination of the parties involved. Rather, he thought that the real determining factor was the economic power which constituted the necessary authority of one group over all others. The assumption of the close connection between economic and political power impelled Marx to describe the political helplessness of the working class and the disputed political authority of the owners of the means of production. Hence, he finally held to the assumption that economic power is the most significant factor to be taken into account in every analysis of power relations and that there was a connection between production relations and power relations.

From the determination of the relations of production, the possibility and the general necessity of the state’s general functions could be derived. It was functionally

in a position to guarantee the general and external conditions of reproduction which could not be created by private capital and to intervene with force “against the encroachment as well of the workers as of individual capitalists” (Engels, 1966:382). This possibility implied at the same time the impossibility of interfering with the foundations of the capitalist reproduction process, namely, private property and the availability of free wage labour. The general necessity of state intervention resulted from the fact that the capitalist process of reproduction structurally presupposed social functions which could not be fulfilled by individual capitalists. The possibility for the state to guarantee the “general and external conditions” of the capitalist process of production; i.e. to mediate necessity and possibility, ultimately lies in the fact that the bourgeois state as an instance rose above the direct production process. It could only maintain its form if the capitalist reproduction process was guaranteed and its own material basis thus secured.

This would necessarily manifest itself in the specifically political and bureaucratic interest of the direct holders of state power and their agents in the safeguarding of capital reproduction and capital relations. This is why the bourgeois state must function as a class state even when the ruling class did not exert direct influence over it. Thus, investigation of the state functions must be based on the categorical analysis of the historical course of the process of capitalist reproduction and accumulation, and on the conceptual analysis of the relations of production.

Having seen main features of the relations of production, we may conclude that the bourgeoisie were dominant within their mode of production, and, as this mode of production became dominant within society, they could establish control over the political order and even mold it to their liking. Thus, while the bourgeoisie came to control the relations of production, they in fact bought out the state and took it over, and then, as Marx put it in *The German Ideology*, “the state has to beg from the bourgeoisie” (Marx and Engels, 1946B:404). In short, a definite mode of production was correlated with particular individual relations among the participants in it. These relations were characterized primarily by the type of ownership of property requisite to the process of production, by the degree of freedom exercised by the participating agents, and also by class antagonism. These relations furnished the key to the classes into which a given society was divided. These relations implied dependence, subordination and power; power involved material force, authority, political hegemony and even intellectual supremacy.

Under this analysis it might be argued that the power relations were hidden behind the relations of production. In this logic, as Poulantzas (1978A:129) put it, the state is not purely and simply “a relationship,” but rather the “specific material

condensation” of a relationship of “forces among classes and classes fractions.”

Given the above discussion, we would argue that, in the analysis of the state, the concepts of social formation, the relations of production, economic structure and power are perhaps the most important and significant elements of the Marxian conceptual framework. The strength of this approach was its emphasis on the importance of the mode of production. The argument that the state mainly permeated into the relations of production may be the strongest point for Marx’s and Engels’ structurealist idea of the state. Without reference to this model of base-superstructure, we could not understand what were the internal relations between the state and society.

In the Marxian structuralist version, power was only a concept indicating the effect of the ensemble of the structures on the relations of production. Thus, the social relations of production were by their very nature the power relations. It could be understood that either relations of production were a special case of power, or power was a special case of the relations of production (Dahrendorf, 1959:21). By power, the ruling classes had the capacity to realize their specific objective interests. This concept was related precisely to the field of “class” practices, class conflict and class struggle. It was related to a field inside which the capacity of one class to realize its own interests through its practices is in opposition to the capacity and interests of other classes. This determined a specific relation of “domination” and “subordination” of class practices, which was exactly characterized as a relation of power. Thus, starting from this opposition, the relation of power implied the possibility of demarcating a clear line between of domination and subordination.

The concept of power, which referred to the ability of a class to realize specific objective interests, also led the state to be an organization of the “power” of a class. In other words, the ruling class yielded the state power, under which the state apparatus must exercise its technico-economic, political, legal, and even ideological functions to fulfill the long-term, or short-term interests of the dominant class. In this sense, the capitalist state, for example, was the “centre of the exercise of political power” by the bourgeois class. Here, the state did not represent directly dominant class’ economic interests, but its political interests.

However, according to Marx, the economic interests of the ruling class were concealed within its political interests. In this sense, the capitalist state has inscribed in its very structure a flexibility which conceded a certain guarantee to the economic interests of certain dominant classes, within the limits of the system. And more importantly, this guarantee was in accordance with the hegemonic domination of the dominant class, i.e. with its political constitution vis-a-vis this state. As representative of the general interests of the people. This concession was part of this state’s very

function.

The important point here is that Marx's expression of the state apparatus in his structuralist view was in no way reducible to an "instrumentalist" conception of the state as an organ or tool of class rule, but rather had the primary function of locating the political superstructure as to its place and function in a social formation.

Conclusion

Although Marx's and Engels' structuralist analysis of the state provided a valuable contribution to political sociology, it is undeniable that this approach involved certain weaknesses. The first, in Marx's classic summary in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, was the undefined character of its key terms. Plamentatz (1966:21) has charged that the vagueness is used "not to express thought but to cover up its absence." Even Engels complained that the summary was "very abstract" (Rader, 1979:12). Marx's idea of "social" relations of production was certainly not self-explanatory, and also was not free from ambiguities. The kinds of relations between the base, or the infrastructure, and the superstructure are not precisely defined. Marx used such diverse terms as "determination," "correspondence," "reflection," "dependence," "condition," and "outgrowth" to indicate these relations, leaving the nature of the connections open to various interpretations.

Marx's use of these terms, we think, just served his holistic point of view. While these terms did seem ambiguous from the standpoint of causality, they were truer to his explanatory intention than any mono-causal explanation could have been. "Base and Superstructure" was an analogy which illustrated Marx's synchronic claims about social structure and his diachronic claims concerning historical change. In a given social formation, it was the relations of production which have causal primacy over politics and ideology. For Marx, the "real basis of the state," the relations "upon which the state rests," were thus society's productive forces and its forms of social intercourse. "These actual relations are in no way created by the state power, on the contrary they are the power creating it" (McLellan, 1988:10). Although this does not mean that Marx held the overdetermination of productive forces," Marx recognized that the superstructure should be seen as more determined than determining. Engels also conceived the elements in the social order as internally related. However, in his discussion of the internal relations within the social formation, he emphasized that "the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary." This led to Marx's and

Engels' claims at a certain extent toward reductionism.

The second weakness may be summarized as follows, in reviewing their arguments, we note that the structuralist idea of the state in/between Marx and Engels was inconsistent, which resulted in Marx's structuralist idea of the state in an ambiguous sense. In *The German Ideology*, for example, Marx described the state as "the form of organization which the bourgeoisie are compelled to adopt... for the mutual guarantee of their property and interests" (Marx and Engels, 1967:59). The implication was that the state and its legal apparatus were necessary for the maintenance of the class structure. In other words, the state could be seen as the "base" for maintaining the dominant relations of production. But in the other passages of this work, they declared "the material life of individuals... is the real basis of the state... These actual relations are in no way created by the state power; on the contrary, they are the power creating it" (McLellan, 1988:10; MECW, 5, 1976:329).

The legal and political superstructure in Marx's model of base-superstructure was constructed upon the base. The base contained the relations of production and the forces of production. Thus, in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx characterized "the sum total of these relations of production" as "the real foundation, on which rise the legal and political superstructure" (McLellan, 1988:19). However, in the Introduction to *The Grundrisse* Marx referred to "legal relations" as among "the relations of production." In a somewhat confused manner, Marx in some passages located the state and law in the superstructure, but in other passages it was located in the level of the base.

Third, Marx treated the model of production into two ways: in *The German Ideology*, he set up a Hegelianized version of the unilinear schema. However, in *The Grundrisse*, Marx described the development out of primitive community in terms of three major alternative forms determined by specific geographical, historical and ethnographic circumstances. He believed that the multiplicity of forms of development which had existed in the precapitalist world. The Asiatic mode of production, for Marx, was seen as a special style of the mode of production, as a more or less universally occurring transition stage between classless and class societies (Sawer, 1977:350). Was the schema of modes of production by its very nature in history unilinear or multilinear? Marx never explained it with a clear sense.

Fourth, Marx suggested that the relations of production were closely associated with ownership, or property. For instance, in *The German Ideology*, he stated that "the different stages of development of the division of labour are only so many different forms of property" (MECW, 5, 1976:32). Yet, in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx described "property relations" as "the

legal expression” of the relations of production, implying that property relations belong to the “superstructure” erected on the “real basis” of the relations of production (MESW, 1968:182). Here, Engels nearly always spoke of the relations of production as if they were the same as the relations of property, but Marx sometimes treated the relations of property as a legal expression. That is, for Engels, the relations of property belong to the infrastructure; for Marx, they may belong to the superstructure. It is quite impossible, as Plamenatz (1963:281) argued, to define relations of property as belonging simultaneously to the infrastructure and the superstructure “except in terms of the claims which men make upon one another and recognize - except in terms of admitted rights and obligations.”

Fifth, according to Marx the relations of production can be seen as the social class relations. However, strictly speaking, in a social formation, the relations of production as a structure covered exactly social class relations. And in the level of relations of production, the state acted as an expression of the legal-political social relations. Hence, in a broad sense, the state, or the legal-political superstructure was not simply constituted by the social class relations. Furthermore, social class cannot simply be reduced to the position of an agent in the ownership/property, or in the labour process, and to their relations to the means of production. It rather is “a concept which shows the effects of the ensemble of structures, of the matrix of a mode of production or of a social formation” (Poulantzas, 1973:67).S

Sixth, Marx was a firm believer in an all-inclusive theory of internal relations derived from Hegel. According to this theory, the basic unit of reality was not a separable being, but a cluster of relations. Since every entity was internally related to every other, the meanings were extraordinarily complex and interdependent. “Marx,” as Ollman (1975:25) declared, “could not keep a definition of one factor from spilling over into everything.”N

Seventh, nevertheless, historically, the exact relation between the base and the superstructure was still not clear. Marx contended that the ancient mode of production in Greece largely determined that the politics of the city-state was dominant and that similarly the feudal mode of production in the Middle Ages largely determined the dominance of feudalism. If we take seriously, according to Max Weber (1951), the interpenetration implied by the doctrine of internal relations, religion in the two modes of production was a part of economic life. It is hard to explain how economic activities comprising one realm can cause religious phenomena in another realm (Lawney, 1972).A

Eighth, according to the mode of production, furthermore, the relations of production determined the form of the state. However, in history, slavery has existed elsewhere w

whithout the politics of the city-state, and feudalism has existed without Catholicism.

This also indicated that Marx did not succeed in explicitly formulating his theory of “internal relations” (Rigby, 1987). In a discussion of the mode of production, Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* argued that when certain primitive collectivistic communistic societies improved their technological means of production and increasingly traded the surplus products, they would result in social classes under which the societies could never again reconcile these class antagonisms. At that time, the “gentile constitution” was finished, and the state replaced it. The “repressive” state attended to the political buttressing of this kind of society, erecting a structure to preserve the class interests of the rich. The succession of states which cuiminated in modern types of state apparatus was “ancient” to “feudal” to “bourgeois.” Precisely, Engels found intra-societal conflicts, and treated the state as the product of privgate property and class-struggle. The difficulty with the class-struggle theory, however, was that we cannot find anywhere in the primitive world even a suggestion that commodity production and private wealth were likely preconditions for the class system or the primitive state (Cohen and Service, 1978:26).

Seventh, both Marx and Engels recognized that the political system may develop a degree of independence or may react in complex ways to the economic system. In his characterization of both precaptialist and capitalist economic formations in *The Grundrisse*, Marx (1971B) repeatedly referred to the necessity of law enforcement by the state. In his letter to Bolch, Engels asserted that the economic structure was “the basis” which determined on the whole of the political and legal structure. But in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1942:157), he suggested that “exceptional periods, however, occur when the warring classes are so nearly equal in forces that the state power, as apparent mediator, acquires for the moment a certain independence in relation to both.” Here, the state also placed itself as a parasite over society, and altenated itself from society. It is clear that the state cannot be a material product of society, and a parasite over society at the same time (Dyer, 1972).

Eighth, in their dialectical version, Marx and Engels asserted that there was a dialectical interaction between base and superstructure. However, Marx and Engels contended that the economic base “in the last instance” always prevalls. In contrast to their historical materialist formation, by holding revolutionary voluntarism, both Marx and Engels asserted that in the revolutionary transition from one kind of class-based social order to another, the first task of the revolution which they held to be the inevitable outcome of the class struggle for a new economic order was the capture of the state by the proletariat and its utter destruction (Hunt, 1962:73). That is, after snatching political power, the rising class could use “the state apparatus” to alter

fundamentally the obsolete relations of production, and thereby to remove the institutional fetters on the forces of production.

Again, it was, according to Marx, unrealistic to separate the economic factors from the political, and to relegate the state with its legal system wholly to the superstructure. However, for example, in his Inaugural Address in 1864 to the First International, Marx mentioned the “immense physical, moral and intellectual benefits” of the Ten Hours Bill (MECW, 7, 1978:147). Far from decrying the need for political action, he claimed that “to conquer political power was ... the great duty of the working classes” (MESW, 2, 1967:439-40). In addition, a very important factor in the permeation of economic and political factors was the exercise of the coercive power of the state. Marx and Engels believed that the state power, e.g. police, court, military force, was the instrument of class domination. Without it, the privileges of the ruling class could not be safeguarded. Following this logic, there can be no system of property without a body of laws to define, and a state power to enforce, the rights of property (Rader, 1979:38). Contradictorily, in his historical-materialist model, Marx asserted the primary importance of economic power, so necessary to the class struggle; in his political practice, however, he held the importance of political power. Obviously, therefore, Marx’s ‘political determinism’ has here carried to an extreme inconsistency with his structuralist view of the state.

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