THE SOURCES

OF

SOCIAL POWER

volume I

A history of power from the beginning to A.D. 1760

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Contents

1 Societies as organized power networks

The three projected volumes of this book provide a history and theory of power relations in human societies. That is difficult enough. But a moment's reflection makes it seem even more daunting: For are not a history and theory of power relations likely to be virtually synonymous with a history and theory of human society itself? Indeed they are. To write a general account, however voluminous, of some of the principal patterns to be found in the history of human societies is unfashionable in the late twentieth century. Such grandly generalizing, Victorian ventures – based on imperial pillaging of secondary sources – have been crushed under the twentieth-century weight of massed volumes of scholarship and serried ranks of academic specialists.

My basic justification is that I have arrived at a distinctive, general way of looking at human societies that is at odds with models of society dominant within sociology and historical writing. This chapter explains my approach. Those uninitiated into social-science theory may find parts of it heavy going. If so, *there is an alternative way of reading this volume.* Skip this chapter, go straight to Chapter 2, or indeed to any of the narrative chapters, and continue until you get confused or critical about the terms used or the underlying theoretical drift. Then turn back to this introduction for guidance.

My approach can be summed up in two statements, from which a distinctive methodology flows. The first is: *Societies are constituted of multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power.* The distinctiveness of my approach will be perceived swiftly if I spend three paragraphs saying what societies are *not.*

Societies are not unitary. They are not social systems (closed or open); they are not totalities. We can never find a single bounded society in geographical or social space. Because there is no system, no totality, there cannot be "subsystems," "dimensions," or "levels" of such a totality. Because there is no whole, social relations cannot be reduced "ultimately," "in the last instance," to some systemic property of it – like the "mode of material production," or the "cultural" or "normative system," or the "form of military organization." Because there is no bounded totality, it is not helpful to divide social change or conflict into "endogenous" and "exogenous" varieties. Because there is no social system, there is no "evolutionary" process within it. Because humanity is not divided into a series of bounded totalities, "diffusion" of social organization does not occur between them. Because there is no totality, individuals are not constrained in their behavior by "social structure as a

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whole," and so it is not helpful to make a distinction between "social action" and "social structure."

I overstated my point in the preceding paragraph for the sake of effect. I will not dispense altogether with these ways of looking at societies. Yet most sociological orthodoxies – such as systems theory, Marxism, structuralism, structural functionalism, normative functionalism, multidimensional theory, evolutionism, diffusionism, and action theory – mar their insights by conceiving of "society" as an unproblematic, unitary totality.

In practice, most accounts influenced by these theories take polities, or *states,* as their "society," their total unit for analysis. Yet states are only one of the four major types of power network with which I will be dealing. The enormous covert influence of the nation-state of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the human sciences means that a nation-state model dominates sociology and history alike. Where it does not, pride of place is sometimes given among archaeologists and anthropologists to "culture," but even this is usually conceived of as a single, bounded culture, a kind of "national culture." True, some modern sociologists and historians reject nation-state models. They equate "society" with transnational economic relations, using either capitalism or industrialism as their master concept. This goes too far in the other direction. State, culture, and economy are all important structuring networks; but they almost never coincide. There is no one master concept or basic unit of "society." It may seem an odd position for a sociologist to adopt; but if I could, I would abolish the concept of "society" altogether.

The second statement flows from the first. Conceiving of societies as multiple overlapping and intersecting power networks gives us the best available entry into the issue of what is ultimately "primary" or "determining" in societies. *A general account of societies, their structure, and their history can best be given in terms of the interrelations of what I will call the four sources of social power: ideological, economic, military, and political* (IEMP) *relationships.* These are (1) *overlapping networks of social interaction,* not dimensions, levels, or factors of a single social totality. This follows from my first statement. (2) They are also *organizations, institutional means of attaining human goals.* Their primacy comes not from the strength of human desires for ideological, economic, military, or political satisfaction but from the particular *organizational means* each possesses to attain human goals, whatever these may be. In this chapter I work gradually toward specifying the four organizational means and my IEMP model of organized power.

From this a distinctive methodology will emerge. It is conventional to write of power relations in terms of a rather abstract language, concerning the interrelation of economic, ideological, and political "factors" or "levels" or "dimensions" of social life. I operate at a more concrete, *sociospatial* and *organizational* level of analysis. The central problems concern *organization, control, logistics, communication* – the capacity to organize and control peo-

ple, materials, and territories, and the development of this capacity throughout history. The four sources of social power offer alternative organizational means of social control. In various times and places each has offered enhanced capacity for organization that has enabled the form of its organization to dictate for a time the form of societies at large. My history of power rests on measuring sociospatial capacity for organization and explaining its development.

That task is made slightly easier by the discontinuous nature of power development. We shall encounter various spurts, attributable to the invention of new organizational techniques that greatly enhanced the capacity to control peoples and territories. A list of some of the more important techniques is given in Chapter 16. When I come across a spurt, I stop the narrative, attempt to measure the enhanced power capacity, and then seek to explain it. Such a view of social development is what Ernest Gellner (1964) calls "neo-episodic." Fundamental social change occurs, and human capacities are enhanced, through a number of "episodes" of major structural transformation. The episodes are not part of a single immanent process (as in nineteenth-century "World Growth Stories"), but they may have a cumulative impact on society. Thus we can venture toward the issue of ultimate primacy.

Ultimate primacy

Of all the issues raised by sociological theory over the last two centuries, the most basic yet elusive is that of ultimate primacy or determinacy. Are there one or more core, decisive, ultimately determining elements, or keystones, of society? Or are human societies seamless webs spun of endless multicausal interactions in which there are no overall patterns? What are the major dimensions of social stratification? What are the most important determinants of social change? These are the most traditional and taxing of all sociological questions. Even in the loose way in which I have formulated them, they are not the same question. Yet they all raise the same central issue: How can one isolate the "most important" element or elements in human societies?

Many consider no answer possible. They claim that sociology cannot find general laws, or even abstract concepts, applicable in the same way to societies in all times and places. This skeptical empiricism suggests we start more modestly, analyzing specific situations with the intuitive and empathic understanding given by our own social experience, building up to a multicausal explanation.

However, this is not a secure epistemological position. Analysis cannot merely reflect the "facts"; our perception of the facts is ordered by mental concepts and theories. The average empirical historical study contains many implicit assumptions about human nature and society, and commonsense concepts derived from our own social experience – such as "the nation," "social

class," "status," "political power," "the economy." Historians get along without examining these assumptions if they are all using the same ones; but as soon as distinctive styles of history emerge – Whig, nationalist, material-ist, neoclassical, and so forth – they are in the realm of competing general theories of "how societies work." But even in the absence of competing assumptions, difficulties arise. Multicausality states that social events or trends have multiple causes. Thus we distort social complexity if we abstract one, or even several, major structural determinants. But we cannot *avoid* doing this. Every analysis selects some but not all prior events as having an effect on subsequent ones. Therefore, everyone operates with some criterion of importance, even if this is rarely made explicit. It can help if we make such criteria explicit from time to time and engage in theory building.

Nevertheless, I take skeptical empiricism seriously. Its principal objection is well founded: Societies are much *messier* than our theories of them. In their more candid moments, systematizers such as Marx and Durkheim admitted this; whereas the greatest sociologist, Weber, devised a methodology (of "ideal-types") to cope with messiness. I follow Weber's example. We *can* emerge with a proximate methodology – and perhaps even eventually with a proxi-mate answer – for the issue of ultimate primacy, but only by devising con-cepts suited to dealing with a mess. This, I claim, is the virtue of a socio-spatial and organizational model of the sources of social power.

Human nature and social power

Let us start with human nature. Human beings are restless, purposive, and rational, striving to increase their enjoyment of the good things of life and capable of choosing and pursuing appropriate means for doing so. Or, at least, enough of them do this to provide the dynamism that is characteristic of human life and gives it a history lacking for other species. These human characteris-tics are the source of everything described in this book. They are the original source of power.

Because of this, social theorists have always been tempted to proceed a little farther with a *motivational model* of human society, attempting to ground a theory of social structure in the "importance" of the various human moti-vational drives. This was more popular around the turn of the century than it is now. Writers like Sumner and Ward would first construct lists of basic human drives –such as those for sexual fulfillment, affection, health, physical exercise and creativity, intellectual creativity and meaning, wealth, prestige, "power for its own sake," and many more. Then they would attempt to establish their relative importance as drives, and from that they would deduce the ranks in social importance of family, economy, government, and so forth. And though this particular practice may be obsolete, a general motivational model of society underpins a number of modern theories, including versions

of materialist and idealist theories. For example, many Marxists claim to derive
the importance of modes of economic production in society from the supposed
strength of the human drive for material subsistence.

Motivational theories will be discussed more fully in Volume III. My con-
clusion will be that though motivational issues are important and interesting,
they are not strictly relevant to the issue of ultimate primacy. Let me briefly
summarize that argument.

The pursuit of almost all our motivational drives, our needs and goals,
involves human beings in external relations with nature and other human beings.
Human goals require both intervention in nature – a material life in the widest
sense – and social cooperation. It is difficult to imagine any of our pursuits
or satisfactions occurring without these. Thus, the characteristics of nature
and the characteristics of social relations become relevant to, and may indeed
structure, motivations. They have *emergent* properties of their own.

This is obvious in nature. For example, the first civilizations usually emerged
where there was alluvial agriculture. We can take for granted the motivational
drive of humans to seek to increase their means of subsistence. That is a
constant. What rather explains the origin of civilization is the opportunity
presented to a few human groups by flooding, which provided ready-fertilized
alluvial soil (see Chapters 3 and 4). No one has argued seriously that the
dwellers in the Euphrates and Nile valleys had stronger economic drives than,
say, the prehistoric inhabitants of the European landmass who did not pioneer
civilization. Rather, the drives that all shared received greater environmental
help from the river valleys (and their regional settings), which led them to a
particular social response. Human motivation is irrelevant except that it pro-
vided the forward drive that enough humans possess to give them a dynamism
wherever they dwell.

The emergence of *social* power relations has always been recognized in
social theory. From Aristotle to Marx the claim has been made that "man"
(unfortunately, rarely woman as well) is a social animal, able to achieve goals,
including mastery over nature, only by cooperation. As there are many human
goals, there are many forms of social relations and large and small networks
of interacting persons, ranging from love to those involving the family, the
economy, and the state. "Symbolic interactionist" theorists such as Shibutani
(1955) have noted that we all dwell in a bewildering variety of "social worlds,"
participating in many cultures – of occupation, class, neighborhood, gender,
generation, hobbies, and many more. Sociological theory heroically simpli-
fies, by selecting out relations that are more "powerful" than others, influ-
encing the shape and the nature of other relations and, therefore, the shape
and nature of social structures in general. This is not because the particular
needs they satisfy are motivationally more "powerful" than others but because
they are more effective as means to achieve goals. Not ends but means give
us our point of entry into the question of primacy. In any society characterized

by a division of labor, specialized social relations satisfying different clusterings of human needs will arise. These differ in their organizing capacities.

Thus we leave the area of goals and needs altogether. For a form of power may not be an original human goal at all. If it is a powerful *means* to other goals, it will be sought for itself. It is an *emergent* need. It emerges in the course of need satisfaction. The most obvious example may be military force. This is probably not an original human drive or need (I shall discuss this in Volume III), but it is an efficient organizational means of fulfilling other drives. Power is, to use Talcott Parsons's expression, a "generalized means" for attaining whatever goals one wants to achieve (1968: I, 263). Therefore, I ignore original motivations and goals and concentrate on emergent *organizational power sources*. If I talk sometimes of "human beings pursuing their goals," this should be taken not as a voluntaristic or psychological statement but as a given, a constant into which I will inquire no further because it has no further social force. I also bypass the large conceptual literature on "power itself," making virtually no reference to the "two (or three) faces of power," "power versus authority" (except in Chapter 2), "decisions versus nondecisions," and similar controversies (well discussed in the early chapters of Wrong 1979). These are important issues, but here I take a different tack. Like Giddens (1979: 91) I do not treat "power *itself* as a resource. Resources are the media through which power is exercised." I have two limited conceptual tasks: (1) to identify the major alternative "media," "generalized means," or, as I prefer, power sources and (2) to devise a methodology for studying organizational power.

Organizational power

Collective and distributive power

In its most general sense, power is the ability to pursue and attain goals through mastery of one's environment. *Social* power carries two more specific senses. The first restricts its meaning to mastery exercised over other people. An example is: Power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance (Weber 1968: I, 53). But as Parsons noted, such definitions restrict power to its *distributive* aspect, power by A *over* B. For B to gain power, A must lose some – their relationship is a "zero-sum game" where a fixed amount of power can be distributed among participants. Parsons noted correctly a second *collective* aspect of power, whereby persons in cooperation can enhance their joint power over third parties or over nature (Parsons 1960: 199–225). In most social relations both aspects of power, distributive and collective, exploitative and functional, operate simultaneously and are intertwined.

Indeed, the relationship between the two is dialectical. In pursuit of their goals, humans enter into cooperative, collective power relations with one

another. But in implementing collective goals, social organization and a division of labor are set up. Organization and division of function carry an inherent tendency to distributive power, deriving from supervision and coordination. For the division of labor is deceptive: Although it involves specialization of function at all levels, the top overlooks and directs the whole. Those who occupy supervisory and coordinating positions have an immense organizational superiority over the others. The interaction and communication networks actually center on their function, as can be seen easily enough in the organization chart possessed by every modern firm. The chart allows superiors to control the entire organization, and it prevents those at the bottom from sharing in this control. It enables those at the top to set in motion machinery for implementing collective goals. Though anyone can refuse to obey, opportunities are probably lacking for establishing alternative machinery for implementing their goals. As Mosca noted, "The power of any minority is irresistible as against each single individual in the majority, who stands alone before the totality of the organized minority" (1939: 53). The few at the top can keep the masses at the bottom compliant, provided their control is *institutionalized* in the laws and the norms of the social group in which both operate. Institutionalization is necessary to achieve routine collective goals; and thus distributive power, that is, social stratification, also becomes an institutionalized feature of social life.

There is, thus, a simple answer to the question of why the masses do not revolt – a perennial problem for social stratification – and it does not concern value consensus, or force, or exchange in the usual sense of those conventional sociological explanations. The masses comply because they lack collective organization to do otherwise, because they are embedded within collective and distributive power organizations controlled by others. They are *organizationally outflanked* – a point I develop in relation to various historical and contemporary societies in later chapters (5, 7, 9, 13, 14, and 16). This means that one conceptual distinction between power and authority (i.e., power considered legitimate by all affected by it) will not figure much in this book. It is rare to find power that is either largely legitimate or largely illegitimate because its exercise is normally so double-edged.

Extensive and intensive and authoritative and diffused power

Extensive power refers to the ability to organize large numbers of people over far-flung territories in order to engage in minimally stable cooperation. *Intensive power* refers to the ability to organize tightly and command a high level of mobilization or commitment from the participants, whether the area and numbers covered are great or small. The primary structures of society combine extensive and intensive power, and so aid human beings in extensive and intensive cooperation to fulfill their goals – whatever the latter may be.

But to talk of power as organization may convey a misleading impression,

as if societies were merely collections of large, authoritative power organizations. Many users of power are much less "organized"; for example, market exchange embodies collective power, for through exchange people achieve their separate goals. And it embodies distributive power, whereby only some persons possess ownership rights over goods and services. Yet it may possess little authoritative organization to assist and enforce this power. To use Adam Smith's famous metaphor, the principal instrument of power in a market is an "Invisible Hand," constraining all, yet not controlled by any single human agency. It *is* a form of human power, but it is not authoritatively organized.

Hence, I distinguish two more types of power, authoritative and diffused. *Authoritative power* is actually willed by groups and institutions. It comprises definite commands and conscious obedience. *Diffused power,* however, spreads in a more spontaneous, unconscious, decentered way throughout a population, resulting in similar social practices that embody power relations but are not explicitly commanded. It typically comprises, not command and obedience, but an understanding that these practices are natural or moral or result from self-evident common interest. Diffused power on the whole embodies a larger ratio of collective to distributive power, but this is not invariably so. It, too, can result in the "outflanking" of subordinate classes such that they consider resistance pointless. This is, for example, how the diffuse power of the contemporary world capitalist market outflanks authoritative, organized working-class movements in individual nation-states today – a point I elaborate in Volume II. Other examples of diffused power are the spread of solidarities such as those of class or nation – an important part of the development of social power.

Putting these two distinctions together gives four ideal-typical forms of organizational reach, specified with relatively extreme examples in Figure 1.1. Military power offers examples of authoritative organization. The power of the high command over its own troops is concentrated, coercive, and highly mobilized. It is intensive rather than extensive – the opposite of a militaristic empire, which can cover a large territory with its commands but has difficulty mobilizing positive commitments from its population or penetrating their everyday lives. A general strike is the example of relatively diffuse but intensive power. Workers sacrifice individual well-being in a cause, to a degree "spontaneously." Finally, as already mentioned, market exchange may involve voluntary, instrumental, and strictly limited transactions over an enormous area – hence it is diffuse and extensive. The most effective organization would encompass all four forms of reach.

Intensity has been much studied by sociologists and political scientists, and I have nothing new to add. Power is intensive if much of the subject's life is controlled or if he or she can be pushed far without loss of compliance (ultimately to death). This is well understood, though not easily quantifiable

	Authoritative	*Diffused*
Intensive	Army command structure	A general strike
Extensive	Militaristic empire	Market exchange

Figure 1.1. *Forms of organizational reach*

in the societies covered in this volume. Extensivity has not figured greatly in previous theories. This is a pity, for it is easier to measure. Most theorists prefer abstract notions of social structure, so they ignore geographical and sociospatial aspects of societies. If we keep in mind that "societies" are *networks,* with definite spatial contours, we can remedy this.

Owen Lattimore can start us on our way. After a lifetime studying the relations between China and the Mongol tribes, he distinguished three radii of extensive social integration, which he argued remained relatively invariant in world history until the fifteenth century in Europe. The most geographically extensive is *military action.* This is itself divisible into two, inner and outer. The inner reaches over territories that, after conquest, could be added to the state; the outer is extended beyond such frontiers in punitive or tribute raids. Hence the second radius, *civil administration* (i.e., the state) is less extensive, being at maximum the inner radius of military action and often far less extensive than this. In turn this radius is more extensive than *economic integration,* which extends at the maximum to the region and at the minimum to the cell of the local village market, because of the feeble development of interaction between units of production. Trade was not altogether lacking, and the influence of Chinese traders was felt outside the effective range of the empire's armies. But communications technology meant that only goods with a high value-to-weight ratio – true luxury items and "self-propelled" animals and human slaves – were exchanged over long distances. The integrating effects of this were negligible. Thus, for a considerable stretch of human history, extensive integration was dependent on military and not economic factors (Lattimore 1962: 480–91, 542–51).

Lattimore tends to equate integration with extensive reach alone; and he also separates too clearly the various "factors" – military, economic, political – necessary for social life. Nevertheless, his argument leads us to analyze the "infrastructure" of power – how geographical and social spaces can be actually conquered and controlled by power organizations.

I measure the reach of authoritative power by borrowing from *logistics,* the military science of moving men and supplies while campaigning. How are commands actually and physically moved and implemented? What control by what power group of what type is erratically or routinely possible given existing logistical infrastructures? Several chapters quantify by asking questions like how many days it takes to pass messages, supplies, and personnel across

given land, sea, and river spaces, and how much control can be thus exercised. I borrow heavily from the most advanced area of such research, military logistics proper. Military logistics provides relatively clear guidelines to the outer reaches of power networks, leading to important conclusions regarding the essentially *federal* nature of extensive preindustrial societies. The unitary, highly centralized imperial society of writers like Wittfogel or Eisenstadt is mythical, as is Lattimore's own claim that military integration was historically decisive. When routine military control along a route march greater than about ninety kilometers is logistically impossible (as throughout much of history) control over a larger area cannot be centralized in practice, nor can it penetrate intensively the everyday lives of the population.

Diffused power tends to vary together with authoritative power and is affected by its logistics. But it also spreads relatively slowly, spontaneously, and "universally" throughout populations, without going through particular authoritative organizations. Such *universalism* also has a measurable technological development. It depends on enabling facilities like markets, literacy, coinage, or the development of class and national (instead of locality or lineage) culture. Markets, and class and national consciousness, emerged slowly throughout history, dependent on their own diffused infrastructures.

General historical sociology can thus focus on the development of collective and distributive power, measured by the development of infrastructure. Authoritative power requires a logistical infrastructure; diffused power requires a universal infrastructure. Both enable us to concentrate on an organizational analysis of power and society and to examine their sociospatial contours.

Current stratification theory

What, then, are the main power organizations? The two main approaches in current stratification theory are Marxian and neo-Weberian. I am happy to accept their initial joint premise: *Social stratification is the overall creation and distribution of power in society.* It is *the* central structure of societies because in its dual collective and distributive aspects it is the means whereby human beings achieve their goals in society. In fact agreement between them generally goes further, for they tend to see the same three types of power organization as predominant. Among Marxists (e.g., Wesolowski 1967; Anderson 1974a and b; Althusser and Balibar 1970; Poulantzas 1972; Hindess and Hirst 1975), among Weberians (e.g., Bendix and Lipset 1966; Barber 1968; Heller 1970; Runciman 1968, 1982, 1983a, b, and c), they are *class*, *status*, and *party*. The two sets of terms have roughly equivalent coverage, so in contemporary sociology the three have become the dominant descriptive orthodoxy.

I am largely happy with the first two, with economic/class and ideology/status. My first deviation from orthodoxy is to suggest *four*, not three, fundamental types of power. The "political/party" type actually contains two

separate forms of power, *political* and *military* power: on the one hand, the central polity, including the state apparatus and (where they exist) political parties; on the other hand, physical or military force. Marx, Weber, and their followers do not distinguish between the two, because they generally view the state as the repository of physical force in society.

To equate physical force with the state often seems to make sense in the case of modern states that monopolize military force. However, conceptually they should be regarded as distinct, to prepare for four eventualities:

1. Most historic states have not possessed a monopoly of organized military force and many have not even claimed it. The feudal state in some European countries in the Middle Ages depended on the feudal military levy controlled by decentralized lords. Islamic states generally lacked monopoly powers – for example, they did not see themselves as having power to intervene in tribal feuding. We can distinguish the political from the military powers of both states and other groups. *Political powers are those of centralized, institutionalized, territorial regulation; military powers are of organized physical force wherever they are organized.*

2. Conquest is undertaken by military groups that may be independent of their home states. In many feudal cases, any freeborn or noble warrior could collect an armed band for raiding and conquering. If this military group did conquer, this increased its power against its own state. In the case of barbarians attacking civilizations, such a military organization often led to the first emergence of a state among the barbarians.

3. Internally, military organization is usually institutionally separate from other state agencies even when under state control. As the military often overthrows the state political elite in a coup d'état, we need to distinguish them.

4. If international relations between states are peaceful but stratified, we will wish to talk of a "political power structuring," of the wider international society that is not determined by military power. This is so today, for example, with respect to the powerful but largely demilitarized Japanese or West German states.

We shall thus treat separately *four* power sources, economic, ideological, military, and political.[1]

"Levels, dimensions" of "society"

The four power sources will be enumerated in detail later in the chapter. But, first, what exactly are they? Orthodox stratification theory is clear. In Marxian theory they are generally referred to as "levels of a social formation"; in neo-

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[1]Giddens (1981) also distinguishes four types of power institution: symbolic orders/modes of discourse, economic institutions, law/modes of sanction/repression, and political institutions.

Weberian theory they are "dimensions of society." Both presuppose an abstract, almost geometric, view of a unitary society. The levels or dimensions are elements of a larger whole, which is indeed composed of them. Many authors represent this diagrammatically. Society becomes a large box or circle of an *n*-dimensional space, subdivided into smaller boxes, sectors, levels, vectors, or dimensions.

This is clearest in the term *dimension*. It derives from mathematics and has two special meanings: (1) Dimensions are analogous and independent, being related in the same way to some underlying structural property. (2) Dimensions inhabit the same overall space, in this case a "society." The Marxian scheme differs in details. Its "levels" are not independent of each other, for the economy has ultimate primacy over the others. Actually, it is more complicated and ambiguous because the Marxian economy plays a double role, as an autonomous "level" of the "social formation" (society) and as the ultimately determining totality itself, given the title of "mode of production." Modes of production give overall character to social formations and, therefore, to the individual levels. Thus the two theories differ: Weberians develop a multifactor theory where the social totality is determined by the complex interplay of the dimensions; Marxists see the totality as "ultimately" determined by economic production. Yet they share a symmetrical vision of society as a single, unitary whole.

This impression of symmetry is reinforced if we look within each dimension/level. Each combines symmetrically three characteristics. They are, first, *institutions*, organizations, stable subsystems of interaction visible in most societies as "churches," "modes of production," "markets," "armies," "states," and so forth. But they are also *functions*. Sometimes these are, secondly *functional ends* pursued by humans. For example, Marxists justify economic primacy on the grounds that humans must first pursue economic subsistence; Weberians justify the importance of ideological power in terms of the human need to find meaning in the world. More often they are viewed, thirdly, as *functional means*. Marxists view political and ideological levels as necessary means to extract surplus labor from the direct producers; Weberians argue that they are all means of power. But organizations, functions as ends, and functions as means are homologous. They are analogous and inhabit the same space. Each level or dimension has the same internal content. It is organization, function as end, and function as means, wrapped up in a single package.

If we carry on down to empirical analysis, the symmetry continues. Each dimension/level can be unpacked into a number of "factors." Arguments weigh the importance of, say, a number of "economic factors" against a number of "ideological factors." The dominant debate has been between a "multifactor" approach, drawing its most important factors from different dimensions/levels, and a "single-factor" approach, drawing its most impor-

tant factor from a single one. On the multifactor side there must now be literally hundreds of books and articles that contain the assertion that ideas, or cultural, or ideological, or symbolic factors are autonomous, have a life of their own, cannot be reduced to material or economic factors (e.g., Sahlins 1976; Bendix 1978: 271–2, 630; Geertz 1980: 13, 135–6). On the single-factor side has run a traditional Marxian polemic against this position. In 1908 Labriola published his *Essays on the Materialist Conception of History*. There he argued that the multifactor approach neglected the *totality* of society, given character by man's praxis, his activity as a material producer. This has been repeated many times since by Marxists (e.g., Petrovic 1967: 67–114).

Despite the polemics, they are two sides of the same assumption: "Factors" are part of functional, organizational dimensions or levels that are analogous, independent subsystems of an overall social whole. Weberians emphasize the lower, more empirical aspects of this; Marxians emphasize the upper aspect of wholeness. But it is the same underlying symmetrical, unitary vision.

The rival theories have virtually the same master concept, "society" (or "social formation" in some Marxian theory). The most frequent usage of the term "society" is loose and flexible, indicating any stable human group, adding nothing to words like the social group or social aggregate or association. This is how I will use the term. But in more rigorous or more ambitious usage, "society" adds a notion of a unitary social system. This is what Comte himself (the coiner of the word "sociology") meant by the term. So, too, did Spencer, Marx, Durkheim, the classical anthropologists, and most of their disciples and critics. Of major theorists, only Weber showed a wariness of this approach and only Parsons has confronted it explicitly. This is his definition: "A society is a type of social system, in any universe of social systems which attains the highest level of self-sufficiency as a system in relation to its environment" (1966: 9). By dropping the excessive use of the word "systems" while preserving Parsons's essential meaning, we can arrive at a better definition: *A society is a network of social interaction at the boundaries of which is a certain level of interaction cleavage between it and its environment*. A society is a unit with boundaries, and it contains interaction that is relatively dense and stable; that is, it is internally patterned when compared to interaction that crosses its boundaries. Few historians, sociologists, or anthropologists would contest this definition (see, e.g., Giddens 1981: 45–6).

Parsons's definition is admirable. But it concerns only degree of unity and patterning. Too often this is forgotten, and unity and patterning are assumed to be present and invariable. This is what I call the *systemic* or *unitary* conception of society. Society and system appeared interchangeable in Comte and his successors, who believed them to be requirements for a science of society: To make general sociological statements requires that we isolate a society and observe regularities in the relationships between its parts. Socie-

ties in the system sense, bounded and internally patterned, exist in virtually every work of sociology and anthropology, and in most theoretically informed works of political science, economics, archaeology, geography, and history. They also exist implicitly in less theoretical works in these disciplines.

Let us examine the etymology of "society." It derives from the Latin *societas.* This elaborated *socius,* meaning a non-Roman ally, a group willing to follow Rome in war. Such a term is common in Indo-European languages, deriving from the root *sekw,* meaning "follow." It denotes an asymmetrical alliance, society as a loose confederation of stratified allies. We will see that this, not the unitary conception, is correct. Let us use the term "society" in its Latin, not its Romance, sense.

But I continue with two broader arguments against the unitary conception of society.

Criticisms

Human beings are social, not societal
A theoretical assumption lies at the base of the unitary conception: Because people are social animals, they have a need to create a society, a bounded and patterned social totality. But this is false. Human beings need to enter into social power relations, but they do not need social totalities. They are social, but not societal, animals.

Let us consider some of their needs again. As they desire sexual fulfillment, they seek sexual relations, usually with only a few members of the opposite sex; as they desire to reproduce themselves, these sexual relations usually combine with relations between adults and children. For these (and other purposes) a family emerges, enjoying patterned interaction with other family units from which sexual partners might be found. As humans need material subsistence they develop economic relationships, cooperating in production and exchange with others. There is no necessity that these economic networks be identical to family or sexual networks, and in most cases they are not. As humans explore the ultimate meaning of the universe, they discuss beliefs and perhaps participate with others similarly inclined in rituals and worship in a church. As humans defend whatever they have obtained, and as they pillage others, they form armed bands, probably of younger men, and they require relations with nonfighters who feed and equip them. As humans settle disputes without constant recourse to force, they set up judicial organizations with a specified area of competence. Where is the necessity for all these social requirements to generate identical sociospatial interaction networks and form a unitary society?

Tendencies toward forming a singular network derive from the emergent need to *institutionalize* social relations. Questions of economic production, of meaning, of armed defense, and of judicial settlement are not fully indepen-

dent of one another. The character of each is likely to be influenced by the character of all, and all are necessary for each. A given set of production relations will require common ideological and normative understandings, and it will require defense and judicial regulation. The more institutionalized these interrelations, the more the various power networks converge toward one unitary society.

But we must recall the original dynamic. The driving force of human society is not institutionalization. History derives from restless drives that generate various networks of extensive and intensive power relations. These networks have a more direct relation to goal attainment than institutionalization has. In pursuit of their goals humans further develop these networks, outrunning the existing level of institutionalization. This may happen as a direct challenge to existing institutions, or it may happen unintentionally and "interstitially" – between their interstices and around their edges – creating new relations and institutions that have unanticipated consequences for the old.

This is reinforced by the most permanent feature of institutionalization, the division of labor. Those involved in economic subsistence, ideology, military defense and aggression, and political regulation possess a degree of autonomous control over their means of power that then further develops relatively autonomously. Marx saw that the forces of economic production continuously outdistance institutionalized class relations and throw up emergent social classes. The model was extended by writers like Pareto and Mosca: The power of "elites" could also rest on noneconomic power resources. Mosca summarized the result:

If a new source of wealth develops in a society, if the practical importance of knowledge grows, if an old religion declines or a new one is born, if a new current of ideas spreads, then, simultaneously, far-reaching dislocations occur in the ruling class. One might say, indeed, that the whole history of civilised mankind comes down to a conflict between the tendency of dominant elements to monopolise political power and transmit possession of it by inheritance and the tendency toward a dislocation of old forces and an insurgence of new forces; and this conflict produces an unending ferment of endosmosis and exosmosis between the upper classes and certain portions of the lower. [1939: 65]

Mosca's model, like Marx's, ostensibly shares the unitary view of society: Elites rise and fall within the same social space. But when Marx actually described the rise of the bourgeoisie (his paradigm case of a revolution in the forces of production), it was not like that. The bourgeoisie rose "interstitially"; it emerged between the "pores" of feudal society, he said. The bourgeoisie, centered on the towns, linked up with landowners, tenant farmers, and rich peasants, treating their economic resources as commodities to create *new* networks of economic interaction, capitalist ones. Actually, as we see in Chapters 14 and 15, it helped create two different overlapping networks – one bounded by the territory of the medium-sized state and one much more extensive, labeled by Wallerstein (1974) the "world system." The bourgeois

revolution did not change the character of an existing society; it created new societies.

I term such processes *interstitial emergence*. They are the outcome of the translation of human goals into organizational means. Societies have never been sufficiently institutionalized to prevent interstitial emergence. Human beings do not create unitary societies but a diversity of intersecting networks of social interaction. The most important of these networks form relatively stably around the four power sources in any given social space. But underneath, human beings are tunneling ahead to achieve their goals, forming new networks, extending old ones, and emerging most clearly into our view with rival configurations of one or more of the principal power networks.

In which society do you live?

Empirical proof can be seen in the answer to a simple question: In which society do *you* live?

Answers are likely to start at two levels. One refers to national states: My society is "the United Kingdom," "the United States," "France," or the like. The other is broader: I am a citizen of "industrial society" or "capitalist society" or possibly "the West" or "the Western alliance." We have a basic dilemma – a national state society versus a wider "economic society." For some important purposes, the national state represents a real interaction network with a degree of cleavage at its boundaries. For other important purposes, capitalism unites all three into a wider interaction network, with cleavage at its edge. They are both "societies." Complexities proliferate the more we probe. Military alliances, churches, common language, and so forth, all add powerful, sociospatially different networks of interaction. We could only answer after developing a sophisticated understanding of the complex interconnections and powers of these various crosscutting interaction networks. The answer would certainly imply a *confederal* rather than a unitary society.

The contemporary world is not exceptional. Overlapping interaction networks are the historical norm. In prehistory, trading and cultural interaction was of enormously greater extent than could be controlled by any "state" or other authoritative network (see Chapter 2). The rise of civilization is explicable in terms of the insertion of alluvial agriculture into various overlapping regional networks (Chapters 3 and 4). In most ancient empires, the mass of the people participated overwhelmingly in small-scale local interaction networks yet were also involved in two other networks, provided by the erratic powers of a distant state, and the rather more consistent, but still shallow, power of semiautonomous local notables (Chapters 5, 8, and 9). Increasingly there arose within, outside, and across the boundaries of such empires more extensive, cosmopolitan, trading-and-cultural networks, which spawned various "world religions" (Chapters 6, 7, 10, and 11). Eberhard (1965: 16) has described such empires as "multilayered," containing both many layers existing

one on top of another, and many small "societies" existing side by side. They are not social systems, he concludes. Social relationships have rarely aggregated into unitary societies – although states sometimes had unitary pretensions. "In which society do you live?" would have been an equally difficult question for the peasant in Roman North Africa or twelfth-century England. (I examine these two cases in Chapters 10 and 12.) Or again, there have been many "culturally federal" civilizations, like ancient Mesopotamia (Chapter 3), classical Greece (Chapter 7), or medieval and early modern Europe (Chapters 12 and 13), where small states have coexisted in a wider, loosely "cultural," network. The forms of overlap and intersection have varied considerably, but they have been always there.

The promiscuity of organizations and functions

To conceive of societies as confederal, overlapping, intersecting networks rather than as simple totalities complicates theory. But we must introduce further complexity. Real institutionalized networks of interaction do not have a simple one-to-one relationship to the ideal-typical sources of social power from which I started. This will lead us to break down the equation of functions and organizations and to recognize their "promiscuity."

Let us consider an example, the relation between the capitalist mode of production and the state. Weberians argue that Marx and his followers neglect the structural power of states and concentrate exclusively on the power of capitalism. They also argue that this is the *same* criticism as saying that Marxists neglect the autonomous power of political factors in society as compared to economic. Marxists reply with a similar packaged answer, denying both charges, or, alternatively, justifying their neglect of both states and politics on the grounds that capitalism and economic power are ultimately primary. But the arguments on both sides must be unpacked. Advanced capitalist states are not political *rather than* economic phenomena: They are both, simultaneously. How could they be otherwise when they redistribute about half of gross national product (GNP) accruing on their territories, and when their currencies, tariffs, educational and health systems, and so forth, are important economic power resources? It is not that Marxists neglect political factors. It is that they neglect that states are economic actors as well as political ones. They are "functionally promiscuous." Thus the advanced capitalist mode of production contains at least two organized actors: classes and nation-states. Disentangling them will be a principal theme of Volume II.

But not all states have been so promiscuous. Medieval European states, for example, redistributed very little of contemporary GNP. Their roles were overwhelmingly, narrowly political. The separation between economic and political functions/organizations was clear and symmetrical – states were political, classes were economic. But the asymmetry between medieval and

modern situations worsens our theoretical problem. Organizations and functions weave across each other in the historical process, now separating clearly, now merging in varying forms. Economic roles can be (and normally are) performed by states, by armies, and by churches, as well as by specialized organizations we generally call "economic." Ideologies are brandished by economic classes, by states, and by military elites, as well as by churches and the like. There are no one-to-one relations between functions and organizations.

It remains true that a broad division of function between ideological, economic, military, and political organizations is ubiquitous, popping up again and again through the interstices of more merged power organizations. We must hang onto this as a simplifying tool of analysis in terms either of the interrelations of a number of autonomous dimensional functions/organizations *or* of the ultimate primacy of one of them. In this sense both Marxian and neo-Weberian orthodoxies are false. Social life does not consist of a number of realms – each composed of a bundle of organizations and functions, ends and means – whose relations with one another are those of external objects.

Organizations of power

If the problem is so difficult, what is the solution? In this section I give two empirical examples of relative predominance by a particular power source. These point to a solution in terms of power *organization*. The first example is of military power. It is often easy to see the emergence of a new military power because the fortunes of war can have such a sudden and clear-cut issue. One such was the rise of the European pike phalanx.

Example 1: the rise of the European pike phalanx

Important social changes were precipitated by military events just after A.D. 1300 in Europe. In a series of battles the old feudal levy, whose core was semiindependent groups of armored mounted knights surrounded by their retainers, was defeated by armies (mainly Swiss and Flemish) that placed greater reliance on dense masses of infantry pikemen (see Verbruggen 1977). This sudden shift in the fortunes of war led to important changes in social power. It hastened the demise of Powers that did not adjust to the lessons of war – for example, the great duchy of Burgundy. But in the long run it strengthened the power of centralized states. They could more easily provide resources to maintain the mixed infantry-cavalry-artillery armies that proved the answer to the pike phalanx. This hastened the demise of classic feudalism in general because it strengthened the central state and weakened the autonomous lord.

Let us consider this first in the light of "factors." Considered narrowly, it seems a simple causal pattern – changes in the technology of military power

relations lead to changes in political and economic power relations. With this model we have an apparent case of military determinism. But this takes no account of the many other factors contributing to the military victory. Most crucial was probably the form of morale possessed by the victors – confidence in the pikeman to the right and to the left and at one's back. In turn, this probably derived from the relatively egalitarian, communal life of Flemish burghers, Swiss burghers, and yeoman farmers. We could continue elaborating until we had a multifactor explanation; or perhaps we could argue that the decisive point was the mode of economic production of the two groups. The stage is set for the kind of argument between economic, military, ideological, and other factors that looms in virtually every area of historical and sociological research. It is a ritual without hope and an end. For military power, like all the power sources, is itself promiscuous. It requires morale and economic surpluses – that is, ideological and economic supports – as well as drawing upon more narrowly military traditions and development. *All* are necessary factors to the exercise of military power, so how can we rank their importance?

But let us try to look at the military innovations in a different, *organizational* light. Of course, they had economic, ideological, and other preconditions. But they also had an intrinsically military, emergent, interstitial power of reorganization – a capacity through particular battlefield superiority to restructure general social networks distinct from those provided by existing dominant institutions. Let us call the latter "feudalism," – comprising a mode of production (extraction of surplus from a dependent peasantry, interrelation of peasant plots of land and lords' manors, delivery of surplus as commodities to the towns, etc.); political institutions (the hierarchy of courts from the vassal to lord to monarch); military institutions (the feudal levy); and a European-wide ideology, Christianity. "Feudalism" is a loose way of describing the dominant way in which the myriad factors of social life, and, at the core, the four sources of social power, were organized and institutionalized across medieval western Europe. But other areas of social life were less central to, and less controlled by, feudalism. Social life is always more complex than its dominant institutions because, as I have emphasized, the dynamic of society comes from the myriad social networks that humans set up to pursue their goals. Among social networks that were not at the core of feudalism were towns and free peasant communities. Their further development was relatively interstitial to feudalism. And in a crucial respect two of them, in Flanders and Switzerland, found that their social organization contributed a particularly effective form of "concentrated coercion" (as I shall define military organization later) to the battlefield. This was unsuspected by anyone, even themselves. It is sometimes argued that the first victory was accidental. At the battle of Courtrai the Flemish burghers were penned against the river by the French knights. They were unable to engage in their usual tactic against

charging knights – flight! Not desirous of being slaughtered, they dug their pikes into the ground, gritted their teeth, and unhorsed the first knightly rank. It is a good example of interstitial surprise – for everyone concerned.

But it is *not* an example of "military" versus "economic" factors. Instead it is an example of a competition between two ways of life, one dominant and feudal, the other hitherto less important and burgher or free peasant, which took a decisive turn on the battlefield. One way of life generated the feudal levy, the other the pike phalanx. Both forms required the myriad "factors" and the functions of all four major power sources necessary for social existence. Hitherto one dominant organizational configuration, the feudal, had predominated and partially incorporated the other into its networks. Now, however, the interstitial development of aspects of Flemish and Swiss life found a rival military organization capable of unhorsing this predominance. Military power *reorganized* existing social life, through the effectiveness of a particular form of "concentrated coercion" on the battlefield.

Indeed the reorganization continued. The pike phalanx sold itself (literally) to rich states whose power over feudal, and town, and independent peasant networks was enhanced (as it was also over religion). An area of social life – undoubtedly a part of European feudalism, but not at its core and so only weakly institutionalized – unexpectedly and interstitially developed a highly concentrated and coercive military organization that first threatened, but then induced a restructuring of, the core. The emergence of an autonomous military organization was in this case short-lived. Both its origins and its destiny were promiscuous – not accidentally so, but in its very nature. Military power enabled a reorganizing spurt, a regrouping both of the myriad networks of society and of its dominant power configurations.

Example 2: The emergence of civilizational cultures and religions

In many times and places, ideologies have spread over a more extensive social space than that covered by states, armies, or modes of economic production. For example, the six best-known pristine civilizations – Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, Yellow River China, Mesoamerica, and Andean America – (with the possible exception of Egypt) arose as a series of small states situated within a larger cultural/civilizational unit, sharing common monumental and artistic styles, forms of symbolic representation, and religious pantheons. In later history, federations of states within a broader cultural unit are also found in many cases (e.g., classical Greece or medieval Europe). The world-salvation religions spread over much of the globe more extensively than any other power organization. Since then, secular ideologies like liberalism and socialism have also spread extensively across the boundaries of other power networks.

So religions and other ideologies are extremely important historical phe-

nomena. Scholars drawing our attention to this argue in factorial terms: It shows, they claim, the autonomy of "ideal" factors from "material" ones (e.g., Coe 1982, and Keatinge 1982 in relation to ancient American civilizations; and Bendix 1978, in relation to the spread of liberalism across the early modern world). Again the materialist counterblast comes: These ideologies are not "free floating" but the product of real social circumstances. True, the ideology does not "float above" social life. Unless ideology stems from divine intervention in social life, then it must explain and reflect real-life experience. But – and in this lies its autonomy – it explains and reflects aspects of social life that existing dominant power institutions (modes of economic production, states, armed forces, and other ideologies) do not explain and organize effectively. An ideology will emerge as a powerful, autonomous movement when it can put together in a single explanation and organization a number of aspects of existence that have hitherto been marginal, interstitial to the dominant institutions of power. This is always a potential development in societies because there are many interstitial aspects of experience and many sources of contact between human beings other than those that form the core networks of dominant institutions.

Let me take up the example of the cultural unity of pristine civilizations (elaborated in Chapters 3 and 4). We observe a common pantheon of gods, festivals, calendars, styles of writing, decoration, and monumental building. We see the broader "material" roles religious institutions performed – predominantly the economic role of storing and redistributing produce and regulating trade, and the political/military role of devising rules of war and diplomacy. And we examine the content of the ideology: the concern with genealogy and the origins of society, with life-cycle transitions, with influencing the fertility of nature and controlling human reproduction, with justifying yet regulating violence, with establishing sources of legitimate authority beyond one's own kin group, village, or state. Thus a religiously centered culture provided to people who lived in similar conditions over a broad region with a sense of collective normative identity and an ability to cooperate that was not intense in its powers of mobilization but that was more extensive and diffuse than state, army, or mode of production provided. A religiously centered culture offered a particular way of organizing social relations. It fused in a coherent organizational form a number of social needs, hitherto interstitial to the dominant institutions of the small familial/village/state societies of the region. Then the power organization of temples, priests, scribes, and so forth, acted back and reorganized those institutions, in particular establishing forms of long-distance economic and political regulation.

Was this the result of its ideological content? Not if we mean by this its ideological answers. After all, the answers that ideologies give to the "meaning of life" questions are not all that varied. Nor are they particularly impressive, both in the sense that they can never be tested and found true, and in the

sense that the contradictions they are supposed to resolve (e.g., the question of theodicy: Why do apparent order and meaning coexist with chaos and evil?) still remain after the answer has been given. Why then do a few ideological movements conquer their region, even much of the world, whereas most do not? The explanation for the difference may reside less in the answers ideologies provide than in the way they set about answering. Ideological movements argue that human problems can be overcome with the aid of *transcendent, sacred authority,* authority that cuts through and across the "secular" reach of economic, military, and political power institutions. Ideological power converts into a distinctive form of social organization, pursuing a diversity of ends, "secular" and "material" (e.g., the legitimation of particular forms of authority) as well as those conventionally considered as religious or ideal (e.g., the search for meaning). If ideological movements are distinct as *organizations,* we can then analyze the situations in which their form seems to answer human needs. There should be determinate conditions of the capacity of transcendent social authority, reaching through, "above," and beyond the reach of established power authorities to solve human problems. It is one of the conclusions of my historical analysis to argue that this is so.

Therefore, the power sources are not composed internally of a number of stable "factors" all showing the same coloration. When an independent source of power emerges, it is promiscuous in relation to "factors," gathering them from all crannies of social life, giving them only a distinctive organizational configuration. We can now turn to the four sources and the distinctive organizational means they imply.

The four sources and organizations of power

Ideological power derives from three interrelated arguments in the sociological tradition. First, we cannot understand (and so act upon) the world merely by direct sense perception. We require concepts and categories of *meaning* imposed upon sense perceptions. The social organization of ultimate knowledge and meaning is necessary to social life, as Weber argued. Thus collective and distributive power can be wielded by those who monopolize a claim to meaning. Second, *norms,* shared understandings of how people should act morally in their relations with each other, are necessary for sustained social cooperation. Durkheim demonstrated that shared normative understandings are required for stable, efficient social cooperation, and that ideological movements like religions are often the bearers of these. An ideological movement that increases the mutual trust and collective morale of a group may enhance their collective powers and be rewarded with more zealous adherence. To monopolize norms is thus a route to power. The third source of ideological power is *aesthetic/ritual practices.* These are not reducible to rational

science. As Bloch (1974) has expressed it, in dealing with the power of religious myth, "You cannot argue with a song." A distinctive power is conveyed through song, dance, visual art forms, and rituals. As all but the most fervent materialists recognize, where meaning, norms, and aesthetic and ritual practices are monopolized by a distinctive group, it may possess considerable extensive and intensive power. It can exploit its functionality and build distributive on top of collective power. In later chapters I analyze the conditions under which an ideological movement can attain such power, as well as its overall extent. Religious movements provide the most obvious examples of ideological power, but more secular examples in this volume are the cultures of early Mesopotamia and classical Greece. Predominantly secular ideologies are characteristic of our own era – for example, Marxism.

In some formulations the terms "ideology" and "ideological power" contain two additional elements, that the knowledge purveyed is false and/or that it is a mere mask for material domination. I imply neither. Knowledge purveyed by an ideological power movement necessarily "surpasses experience" (as Parsons puts it). It cannot be totally tested by experience, and therein lies its distinctive power to persuade and dominate. But it need not be false; if it is, it is less likely to spread. People are not manipulated fools. And though ideologies always do contain legitimations of private interests and material domination, they are unlikely to attain a hold over people if they are merely this. Powerful ideologies are at least highly plausible in the conditions of the time, and they are genuinely adhered to.

These are the functions of ideological power, but to what distinct organizational contours do they give rise?

Ideological organization comes in two main types. In the first, more autonomous form it is sociospatially *transcendent*. It transcends the existing institutions of ideological, economic, military, and political power and generates a "sacred" form of authority (in Durkheim's sense), set apart from and above more secular authority structures. It develops a powerful autonomous role when emergent properties of social life create the possibility of greater cooperation or exploitation that transcend the organizational reach of secular authorities. Technically, therefore, ideological organizations may be unusually dependent on what I called *diffused* power techniques, and therefore boosted by the extension of such "universal infrastructures" as literacy, coinage, and markets.

As Durkheim argued, religion arises out of the usefulness of normative integration (and of meaning and aesthetics and ritual), and it is "sacred," set apart from secular power relations. But it does not merely integrate and reflect an already established "society"; indeed it may actually create a society-like network, a religious or cultural community, out of emergent, interstitial social needs and relations. Such is the model I apply in Chapters 3 and 4 to the first extensive civilizations, and in Chapters 10 and 11 to the world-salvation reli-

gions. Ideological power offers a distinctive sociospatial method of dealing with emergent social problems.

The second configuration is ideology as immanent *morale*, as intensifying the cohesion, the confidence, and, therefore, the power of an already-established social group. Immanent ideology is less dramatically autonomous in its impact, for it largely strengthens whatever is there. Nevertheless, ideologies of class or nation (the main examples) with their distinctive infrastructures, usually extensive and diffuse, contributed importantly to the exercise of power from the times of the ancient Assyrian and Persian empires onward.

Economic power derives from the satisfaction of subsistence needs through the social organization of the extraction, transformation, distribution, and consumption of the objects of nature. A grouping formed around these tasks is called a *class* – which in this work, therefore, is purely an *economic* concept. Economic production, distribution, exchange, and consumption relations normally combine a high level of intensive and extensive power, and have been a large part of social development. Thus classes form a large part of overall social-stratification relations. Those able to monopolize control over production, distribution, exchange, and consumption, that is, a dominant class, can obtain general collective and distributive power in societies. Again I shall analyze the conditions under which such power arises.

I will not enter here into the many debates concerning the role of classes in history. I prefer the context of actual historical problems, beginning in Chapter 7 with class struggle in ancient Greece (the first historical era for which we have good evidence). There I distinguish four phases in the development of class relations and class struggle – *latent, extensive, symmetrical,* and *political* class structures. I use these in succeeding chapters. My conclusions are stated in the last chapter. We will see that classes, though important, are not "the motor of history" as Marx, for one, believed.

On one important issue the two main traditions of theory differ. Marxists stress control over labor as the source of economic power, and so they concentrate on "modes of *production.*" Neo-Weberians (and others, like the substantivist school of Karl Polanyi) stress the organization of economic *exchange.* We cannot elevate one above the other on a priori theoretical grounds; historical evidence must decide the issue. To assert, as many Marxists do, that production relations must be decisive because "production comes first" (i.e., it precedes distribution, exchange, and consumption) is to miss the point of "emergence." Once a form of exchange emerges, it is a social fact, potentially powerful. Traders can react to opportunity at their end of the economic chain and then act back upon the organization of production that originally spawned them. A trading empire like the Phoenician is an example of a trading group whose actions decisively altered the lives of the producing groups whose needs originally created their power (e.g., developing the alphabet – see Chapter 7). Relations between production and exchange are complex and

often attenuated: Whereas production is high on intensive power, mobilizing intense local social cooperation to exploit nature, exchange may occur extremely extensively. At its fringes, exchange may encounter influences and opportunities that are far removed from the production relations that originally generated selling activities. Economic power is generally diffuse, not controllable from a center. This means that class structure may not be unitary, a single hierarchy of economic power. Production and exchange relations may, if attenuated, fragment class structure.

Thus classes are groups with differential power over the social organization of the extraction, transformation, distribution, and consumption of the objects of nature. I repeat that I use the term *class* to denote a purely economic power grouping, and the term *social stratification* to denote any type of distribution of power. The term *ruling class* will denote an economic class that has successfully monopolized other power sources to dominate a state-centered society at large. I leave open for historical analysis questions concerning the interrelations of classes to other stratification groupings.

Economic organization comprises circuits of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. Its main sociospatial peculiarity is that although those circuits are extensive, they also involve the intensive practical, everyday labor – what Marx called the praxis – of the mass of the population. Economic organization thus offers a distinctively stable, sociospatial blend of extensive and intensive power, and of diffused and authoritative power. Therefore, I shall call economic organization *circuits of praxis*. This perhaps rather pompous term is intended to build upon two of Marx's insights. First, at one "end" of a reasonably developed mode of production are a mass of workers laboring and expressing themselves through the conquest of nature. Second, at the other "end" of the mode are complex, extensive circuits of exchange into which millions may be locked by impersonal, seemingly "natural," forces. The contrast is extreme in the case of capitalism, but nonetheless present in all types of economic-power organization. Groups defined in relation to the circuits of praxis are classes. The degree to which they are "extensive," "symmetrical," and "political" across the whole circuit of praxis of a mode of production[2] will determine the organizing power of class and class struggle. And this will turn on the tightness of linkage between intensive local production and extensive circuits of exchange.

Military power was partly defined earlier. It derives from the necessity of organized physical defense and its usefulness for aggression. It has both intensive and extensive aspects, for it concerns questions of life and death, as well as the organization of defense and offense in large geographical and social

[2]From now on I will use the term *mode of production* as shorthand for "mode of production, distribution, exchange and consumption." I do not thereby imply the primacy of production over the other spheres.

spaces. Those who monopolize it, as military elites, can obtain collective and distributive power. Such power has been neglected of late in social theory, and I return to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century writers like Spencer, Gumplowicz, and Oppenheimer (although they usually exaggerated its capacities).

Military organization is essentially *concentrated-coercive*. It mobilizes violence, the most concentrated, if bluntest, instrument of human power. This is obvious in wartime. Concentration of force forms the keystone of most classic discussions of military tactics. But as we shall see in various historical chapters (especially 5–9), it may endure beyond the battlefield and the campaign. Militaristic forms of social control attempted in peacetime are also highly concentrated. For example, directly coerced labor, whether slave or corvée, often built city fortifications, monumental buildings, or main communication roads or channels. Coerced labor appears also in mines, on plantations, and on other large estates, and in the households of the powerful. But it is less suited to normal dispersed agriculture, to industry where discretion and skill are required, or to the dispersed activities of commerce and trade. The costs of effectively enforcing direct coercion in these areas have been beyond the resources of any known historical regime. Militarism has thus proved useful where concentrated, intensive, authoritative power has yielded disproportionate results.

Second, military power also has a more extensive reach, of a negative, terroristic form. As Lattimore pointed out, throughout most of history military striking range was greater than the range of either state control or economic-production relations. But this is minimal control. The logistics are daunting. In Chapter 5, I calculate that throughout ancient history the maximum unsupported march practicable for an army was about 90 kilometers – scant basis for intensive military control over large areas. Faced with a powerful military force located, let us say, 300 kilometers away, locals might be concerned to comply externally with its dictates – supply annual tribute, recognize the suzerainty of its leader, send young men and women to be "educated" at its court – but everyday behavior could be otherwise unconstrained.

Thus military power is sociospatially dual: a concentrated core in which positive, coerced controls can be exercised, surrounded by an extensive penumbra in which terrorized populations will not normally step beyond certain niceties of compliance but whose behavior cannot be positively controlled.

Political power (also partly defined earlier) derives from the usefulness of centralized, institutionalized, territorialized regulation of many aspects of social relations. I am not defining it in purely "functional" terms, in terms of judicial regulation backed by coercion. Such functions can be possessed by any power organization – ideological, economic, military, as well as states. I restrict it to regulations and coercion centrally administered and territorially bounded – that is, to *state* power. By concentrating on the state, we can

analyze its distinctive contribution to social life. As here defined, political
power heightens boundaries, whereas the other power sources may transcend
them. Second, military, economic, and ideological power can be involved in
any social relationships, wherever located. Any A or group of As can exercise
these forms of power against any B or group of Bs. By contrast, political
relations concern one particular area, the "center." Political power is located
in that center and exercised outward. Political power is necessarily centralized
and territorial, and in these respects differs from the other power sources (see
Mann 1984, for fuller discussions; a formal definition of the state is also given
in my next chapter). Those who control the state, the state elite, can obtain
both collective and distributive power and trap others within their distinctive
"organization chart."

Political organization is also sociospatially dual, though in a different sense.
Here we must distinguish domestic from "international" organization.
Domestically, the state is *territorially centralized* and territorially-bounded.
States can thus attain greater autonomous power when social life generates
emergent possibilities for enhanced cooperation and exploitation of a central-
ized form over a confined territorial area (elaborated in Mann 1984). It depends
predominantly upon techniques of authoritative power, because centralized,
though not as much so as military organization. When discussing the actual
powers of state elites, we will find it useful to distinguish formal "despotic"
powers from real "infrastructural" powers. This is explained in Chapter 5 in
the section titled "The Comparative Study of Ancient Empires."

But states' territorial boundaries – in a world never yet dominated by a
single state – also give rise to an area of regulated interstate relations. *Geo-
political diplomacy* is a second important form of political-power organiza-
tion. Two geopolitical types – the hegemonic empire dominating marcher and
neighboring clients, and varying forms of multistate civilization – will play a
considerable role in this volume. Clearly, geopolitical organization is very
different in form from the other power organizations mentioned so far. It is
indeed normally ignored by sociological theory. But it is an essential part of
social life and it is not reducible to the "internal" power configurations of its
component states. For example, the successive hegemonic and despotic pre-
tensions of the German emperor Henry IV, Philip II of Spain, and Bonaparte
of France were only in a superficial sense humbled by the strength of the states
and others who opposed them – they were really humbled by the deep-rooted,
multistate diplomatic civilization of Europe. Geopolitical power organization
is thus an essential part of overall social stratification.

To summarize so far: Human beings pursuing many goals set up many net-
works of social interaction. The boundaries and capacities of these networks
do not coincide. Some networks have greater capacity for organizing inten-
sive and extensive, authoritative and diffused, social cooperation than others.

The greatest are the networks of ideological, economic, military, and political power – the four sources of social power. Each then implies distinctive forms of sociospatial organization by which humans can attain a very broad, but not exhaustive, package of their myriad goals. The importance of these four lies in their combination of intensive and extensive power. But this is translated into historical determinacy through the various organizational means that impose their general shape onto a large part of general social life. The main shapes I identified were *transcendent* or *immanent* (from ideological power), *circuits of praxis* (economic), *concentrated-coercive* (military), and *centralized-territorial* and *geopolitical diplomatic* (political) organization. Such configurations become what I called "promiscuous," drawing in and structuring elements from many areas of social life. In example 2 above, the transcendent organization of the culture of early civilizations drew in aspects of economic redistribution, of rules of warfare, and of political and geopolitical regulation. Thus we are dealing not with the external relations between different sources, dimensions, or levels of social power but rather with (1) the sources as ideal types that (2) attain intermittent existence as distinct organizations within the division of labor and that (3) may exert more general, promiscuous shaping of social life. In (3) one or more of these organizational means will emerge interstitially as the primary reorganizing force in either the short term, as in the military example, or the long term, as in the ideological example. This is the IEMP model of organized power.

Max Weber once used a metaphor drawn from the railways of his time when trying to explain the importance of ideology – he was discussing the power of salvation religions. He wrote that such ideas were like "switchmen" (i.e., "pointsmen" in British railways) determining down which of several tracks social development would proceed. Perhaps the metaphor should be amended. The sources of social power are "tracklaying vehicles" – for the tracks do not exist before the direction is chosen – laying different gauges of track across the social and historical terrain. *The "moments" of tracklaying, and of converting to a new gauge, are the closest that we can approach the issue of primacy.* In these moments we find an autonomy of social concentration, organization, and direction that is lacking in more institutionalized times.

That is the key to the importance of the power sources. They give collective organization and unity to the infinite variety of social existence. They provide such significant patterning as there is in large-scale social structure (which may or may not be very great) because they are capable of generating collective action. They are "the generalized means" through which human beings make their own history.

The overall IEMP model, its scope and omissions

The overall model is presented in summary diagrammatic form in Figure 1.2. The predominance of broken lines in the diagram indicates the messiness of
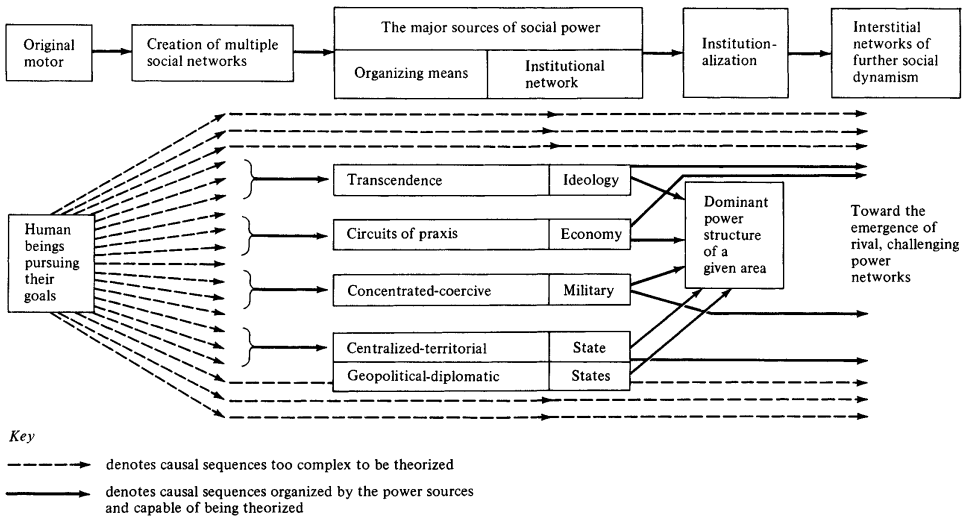
Figure 1.2. *Causal IEMP model of organized power*

The diagram contains the following labeled elements:

Top row of boxes:
- Original motor
- Creation of multiple social networks
- The major sources of social power
  - Organizing means
  - Institutional network
- Institution-alization
- Interstitial networks of further social dynamism

Left box:
- Human beings pursuing their goals

Central paired boxes:
- Transcendence | Ideology
- Circuits of praxis | Economy
- Concentrated-coercive | Military
- Centralized-territorial | State
- Geopolitical-diplomatic | States

Right-center box:
- Dominant power structure of a given area

Right text:
- Toward the emergence of rival, challenging power networks

Key

- - - - → denotes causal sequences too complex to be theorized

———→ denotes causal sequences organized by the power sources and capable of being theorized

human societies: Our theories can only encompass some of their broadest contours.

We start with humans pursuing goals. I don't mean by this that their goals are "presocial" – rather that what the goals are, and how they are created, is not relevant for what follows. Goal-oriented people form a multiplicity of social relationships too complex for any general theory. However, relationships around the most powerful organizational means coalesce to form broad institutional networks of determinate, stable shape, combining both intensive and extensive power and authoritative and diffused power. There are, I suggest, four such major sources of social power, each centered on a different means of organization. Pressures toward institutionalization tend to partially merge them in turn into one or more dominant power networks. These provide the highest degree of boundedness that we find in social life, though this is far from total. Many networks remain interstitial both to the four power sources and to the dominant configurations; similarly, important aspects of the four power sources also remain poorly institutionalized into the dominant configurations. These two sources of interstitial interaction eventually produce a more powerful emergent network, centered on one or more of the four power sources, and induce a reorganization of social life and a new dominant configuration. And so the historical process continues.

This is an approach to the issue of ultimate primacy, but it is not an answer. I have not even commented at all on what is the major point of contention between Marxian and Weberian theory: whether we can single out economic power as ultimately decisive in determining the shape of societies. This is an empirical question, and so I first review the evidence before attempting a provisional answer in Chapter 16 and a fuller answer in Volume III.

There are three reasons why the empirical test must be historical. First, the model is essentially concerned with processes of social change. Second, my rejection of a conception of society as unitary makes one alternative mode of inquiry, that of "comparative sociology," more difficult. Societies are not self-contained units to be simply compared across time and space. They exist in particular settings of regional interaction that are unique even in some of their central characteristics. The chances for comparative sociology are very limited when there are so *few* comparable cases. Third, my methodology is to "quantify" power, to trace out its exact infrastructures, and it is immediately obvious that quantities of power have developed enormously throughout history. The power capacities of prehistoric societies (over nature and over human beings) were considerably less than those of, say, ancient Mesopotamia, which were less than those of the later Roman Republic, which again were greatly exceeded by sixteenth-century Spain, then nineteenth-century Britain, and so forth. It is more important to capture this history than to make comparisons across the globe. This is a study of "world time," to use Eberhard's expression (1965: 16), in which each process of power development affects the world around it.

The most appropriate history is that of the most powerful human society, modern Western civilization (including the Soviet Union), whose history has been just about continuous from the origins of Near Eastern civilization around 3000 B.C. to the present day. It is a developmental, though not an evolutionary or a teleological, history. There has been nothing "necessary" about it – it just happened that way (and it nearly ended on several occasions). It is not a history of any single social or geographical space. As such enterprises generally do, mine starts with the general conditions of neolithic societies, then centers on the ancient Near East, then gradually moves west and north through Anatolia, Asia Minor, and the Levant to the eastern Mediterranean. Then it moves into Europe, ending in the eighteenth century in Europe's westernmost state, Great Britain. Each chapter concerns itself with the "leading edge" of power, where the capacity to integrate peoples and spaces into dominant configurations is most infrastructurally developed. Such a method is in a sense unhistorical, but its jumpiness is also a strength. Power capacities have developed unevenly, in jumps. So studying those jumps and trying to explain them gives us the best empirical entry into the issue of primacy.

What have I left out of this history? An enormous amount of detail and complexity, of course, but beyond that every model puts some phenomena at center stage and relegates others to the wings. If the latter ever manage to occupy center stage, then the model will not deal effectively with them. There is one conspicuous absence from this volume: gender relations. In Volume II, I seek to justify my uneven treatment in terms of their actual unevenness in history. I will argue that gender relations remained broadly constant, in the general form of *patriarchy,* throughout much of recorded history until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, when rapid changes began to occur. But that discussion awaits Volume II. In the present volume power relations discussed are normally those in the "public sphere" between male household heads.

From the specialist historian, I plead for generosity and breadth of spirit. Having covered a large slice of recorded history, I have doubtless committed errors of fact, and probably a few howlers. I ask whether correcting them would invalidate the overall arguments. I also ask more aggressively whether the study of history, especially in the Anglo-American tradition, would not benefit from more explicit consideration of the nature of societies. To the sociologist I also speak with some acerbity. Much contemporary sociology is ahistorical, but even much historical sociology is concerned exclusively with the development of "modern" societies and the emergence of industrial capitalism. This is so decisive in the sociological tradition that, as Nisbet (1967) has shown, it produced the pivotal dichotomies of modern theory. From status to contract, from gemeinschaft to gesellschaft, from mechanical to organic solidarity, from sacred to secular – these and other dichotomies locate the watershed of history at the end of the eighteenth century. Eighteenth-century theorists like Vico, Montesquieu, or Ferguson did not thus regard history.

Unlike modern sociologists who know only the recent history of their own national state, plus some anthropology, they knew that complex, differentiated, and stratified societies – secular, contractual, organic, gesellschaft, but *not* industrial – had existed for at least two thousand years. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that knowledge declined among sociologists. Paradoxically, its decline has continued through the very time when historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists have been using new techniques, many from sociology, to make striking discoveries about the social structure of these complex societies. But their analysis is weakened by their relative ignorance of sociological theory.

Weber is an outstanding exception to this narrowing. My debt to him is enormous – not so much in terms of adopting his specific theories, but rather, in adhering to his general vision of the relationship between society, history, and social action.

My demand for sociological theory based on historical depth and breadth is not based merely on the intrinsic desirability of realizing the rich diversity of human experience – though that would be valuable enough. More than this, I claim that some of the most important characteristics of our world today can be appreciated more clearly by historical comparison. It is not that history repeats itself. Precisely the opposite: World history develops. Through historical comparison we can see that the most significant problems of our own time are novel. That is why they are difficult to solve: They are interstitial to institutions that deal effectively with the more traditional problems for which they were first set up. But, as I shall suggest, all societies have faced sudden and interstitial crises, and in some cases humanity has emerged enhanced. At the end of a long historical detour, I hope to demonstrate the relevance of this model for today in Volume II.

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