

EDGES OF THE STATE

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INTRODUCTION STATIFICATIONS

... the state does not have an essence. The state is not a universal nor in itself an autonomous source of power. The state is nothing else but the effect, the profile, the mobile shape of a perpetual statification [*étatisation*] or perpetual statifications [*étatisations*] in the sense of incessant transactions which modify, or move, or drastically change, or insidiously shift sources of finance, modes of investment, decision-making centers, forms and types of control, relationships between local powers, the central authority, and so on.

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*

In the above passage, Foucault de-essentializes the state by emphasizing its processual character; it is not a thing, but a modification of "governmentality" practices. (Governmentality is a mode of power; as such it is an attempt to "structure the possible field of action of others" [Foucault 2000: 341] but in the mode of "conduct of conduct" (341), that is, leading, inducing, or incentivizing rather than commanding or terrorizing or other coercive means of shaping the field of action.) Hence, Foucault recommends we do not start by analyzing the "essence" of the state and then trying to deduce current practices of state governmentality as accidents accruing to the substance defined by that essence; rather we should look to "incessant transactions which modify" pre-existing practices. Foucault continues with his nominalist anti-essentialism: "The state has ... no interior. The state is nothing else but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities" (Foucault 2008: 77).

Although in the above passage Foucault is talking about the shift in Europe from multiple feudal and religious practices to centralized administrative state functions, nonetheless we can generalize the notion of "statification" as the production of state-form social relations in any context. In this way, we can see statification in the anthropological sense as the centralizing and hierarchizing inherent in the putting into the state-form of social relations of non-state societies such as egalitarian forager bands and chief-led autonomous villages.

The task of this book, then, is to use the generalized notion of statification to shift perspective, and, instead of looking, as almost all political philosophers do, for the criteria by which states are justified, looking rather the edges of statification: their breakdowns and attempts to repair them, and their encounters with non-state peoples, both their predecessors and their neighbors, those who were incorporated into states, and those who flee and fight them.

To get at what happens at the edges of the state, I call upon anthropology, political philosophy, neuroscience, evolutionary biology, child development psychology and other fields to look at states as projects of constructing "bodies politic" where the civic

and the somatic intersect, where small and large-scale social relations are made to fit with individual and group affective cognitive structures via subjectification practices.

In my investigation of state-formation processes, I take my ontological framework from Deleuze and Guattari and from Manuel DeLanda. I identify multiplicities, or dynamic interacting processes with critical takeoff points in multiple registers: temporal (evolutionary, developmental, and inter-generational), social (group dynamics, family dynamics, caretaker dynamics), and somatic (neural and endocrinological patterning). Not only are there dynamic interactions in the processes in each of these registers, there are loops among registers, via processes of niche-construction and epigenetic inheritance discussed in Developmental Systems Theory (Oyama, Griffiths, and Gray 2001). If we adopt the most radical interpretations of those phenomena, the result of these loops is that bodies politic are constructed not only via gene-culture interaction bringing changes to DNA sequences, but also via heritable changes to gene expression pathways provoked by socialization processes constituting historically variable niches (Protevi 2009 and 2013).

In this wide-ranging materialist ontology, I use the same basic concepts of self-organizing systems in both natural and social registers. This enables me to couple the political and the bodily, to connect the social and the somatic. Basically, Deleuze and Guattari let us go "above," "below," and "alongside" the subject: above to geo-ecopolitics, below to bio-culture, and alongside to social-techno assemblages. We live at the crossroads: singular subjects arise from a crystallization or resolution of a distributed network of natural processes and social practices.

A "bodies politic" approach sees human nature as bio-cultural; by connecting the social and the somatic we avoid the extremes of social constructivism and genetic determinism. In a formula, human nature has evolved to be open enough to our nurture that it becomes a sort of second nature; there is, however, a default, though not failsafe, predisposition to prosociality, to being emotionally invested in social partners and patterns, to the point of bearing risks to help others and to reinforce practices. In imbricating the social and the somatic, a bodies politic framework allows us to see that the reproduction of social systems requires producing (somatic) bodies whose affective-cognitive patterns and triggers fit the functional needs of the system. In turn, such patterning enables social systems that direct material flows. I think this allows both an emergence perspective such that social systems are emergent from constituents, but are immanent to the system they form with them, and a concretion perspective such that individuals are crystallizations of systems – or more prosaically, we grow up in systems that form us.

FORECAST OF CHAPTERS

In Chapter 1, "Breakdowns of the State: Prosocial Behavior in Disasters" we will find, in the breakdown of the modern state, prosocial behavior overcoming state-supported atomization. Understanding prosociality will lead us to questions about political emotion and about the evolution of altruism (aid to others with a fitness cost). If you adopt the individual as the unit of selection, then contemporary altruism is a puzzle as traits leading to it should have been selected against. There are a number of postulated processes to solve the puzzle while still maintaining the individual as unit of selection,

but if the move to rehabilitate group selection is accepted, then altruism could evolve as fitness costs to individuals would be compensated for at the group level. But what is the selection pressure at group level? A response given by Darwin and recently re-adopted by some present-day thinkers is war. But was war prevalent enough in pre-state times to serve such a role? We will take this question up in Chapters 2 and 3.

In Chapter 2, "Before the State: Rousseau and the *Discourse on Inequality*," I look at a beautiful text at the intersection of philosophy and anthropology, noting three points where it can be put in contact with contemporary thought. First, I examine Rousseau's "savage man" and the anthropological thesis of "human self-domestication" in the transition into, and shifts within, the genus *Homo*. Second, I look at Rousseau's "happiest and most lasting epoch" – after the "first revolution" resulted in humans living in egalitarian forager bands – in the context of the current anthropological debates about how to interpret contemporary foragers. Third, I briefly touch on Rousseau's account of the origin of cities, states, agriculture, and slavery and the current anthropological debates about the origin of war, in order to set up the work in Chapters 3 and 4.

In Chapter 3, "Warding off the State: Non-state Economies of Violence," I investigate theories that patterns (or "economies") of violence among pre-state peoples had the effect of preventing state formation. Here we find the legacy of Pierre Clastres (1989 and 1994), who identified war in "primitive" society as an anti-state social mechanism. But "primitive" for Clastres generalizes over quite different non-state social formations, egalitarian nomadic foragers and chief-led sedentary horticulturalists. They have different ways of avoiding the state; in fact, following Christopher Boehm (2012a and 2012b), we can say that the economy of violence of nomadic foragers is both anti-state and anti-war. Here we will have to talk about ostracism, exile, and capital punishment as intra-group anti-state economies of violence, and personalized vengeance as inter-group anti-war mechanisms.

In Chapter 4, "Origins of the State: James C. Scott, stratification and *marronage*," I investigate, with the help of Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc (2011), Deleuze and Guattari's positing of the state-form and the primitive-form as virtual "abstract machines" incarnated in varying relations of actual state and non-state bodies politic. I then use that framework to analyze treat James C. Scott's work on the "deep history" of the first Mesopotamian states, *Against the Grain* (2017), and his treatment of state and nonstate peoples in *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009). A prime concern of Scott is maroon societies formed by people fleeing from states; according to Scott, who knowingly adopts the pejorative term states use for nonstate peoples, such "barbarians" have their own economy of violence by which – in competing with state elites – they prey upon the state's domesticated work force, the primary producers of agricultural surplus.

In Chapter 5, "Fractures of the State: Deleuze and Guattari on Ideology," I investigate the social reproduction processes of states. If states are ongoing processes of stratification, then the social relations that constitute them must be constantly reproduced. While ideology is supposed to explain the production and reproduction of "bodies politic," Deleuze and Guattari think ideology, qua belief structures, is not up to the task; it fails especially with fascism, as it cannot handle subpersonal body-political affective-cognitive patterning or "desire." In response, Deleuze and Guattari develop a

notion of microfascism that spreads throughout a society enabling a macrofascist state. But can we save the term "ideology" by including affect? I do not see why not; it might be that Deleuze and Guattari's belief-centered notion is a straw man for certain rich concepts of ideology, which already include affect.

In the Conclusion, "Human Nature at the Edges of the State," I bring together the themes of the book to propose the following normative standard drawn from a notion of prosocial human nature: *act such that you nurture the capacity to enact repeatable active joyous encounters of positive sympathetic care and fair cooperation for self and others without qualification.*