2

Power, Authority and the State

Area Goals

By the end of this area you should:

- Be aware of Anthony Giddens's conception of modernity
- Have a critical understanding of the distinction that Max Weber made between authority and coercion
- Have a critical understanding of the three types of legitimate rule outlined by Max Weber
- Be familiar with the contribution of Michel Foucault to our understanding of power and authority
- Be familiar with Jurgen Habermas's contribution to our understanding of the processes of legitimation within social systems
- Be familiar with the contribution of Richard Sennett to our understanding of authority
- Understand the postmodern conception of the state
- Be familiar with the nature of state-centred theories

Understanding how some people effectively control the actions of others is one of the central questions in sociology. This is the question of power or domination. The central questions in the sociology of politics are 'How is power exercised?' and 'By what means is power made right, just or legitimate?' Authority, whereby people are seen to have a legitimate right to control the behaviour of others, is

Surveillance

(Control of information and
social supervision; for
example, the use of CCTV)

Capitalism

(Capital accumulation, the
accumulation of profits, in the
context of competitive
labour and productive markets)

Military power

(Control of the means of violence
in the context of the industrialisation
of war, the use of advanced
industry in the help to fight wars; for
example, in the Gulf War)

Industrialism

(Transformation of nature:
development of the 'created
environment'; in other words, all aspects
of natural places have been
refashioned in some way; there is no
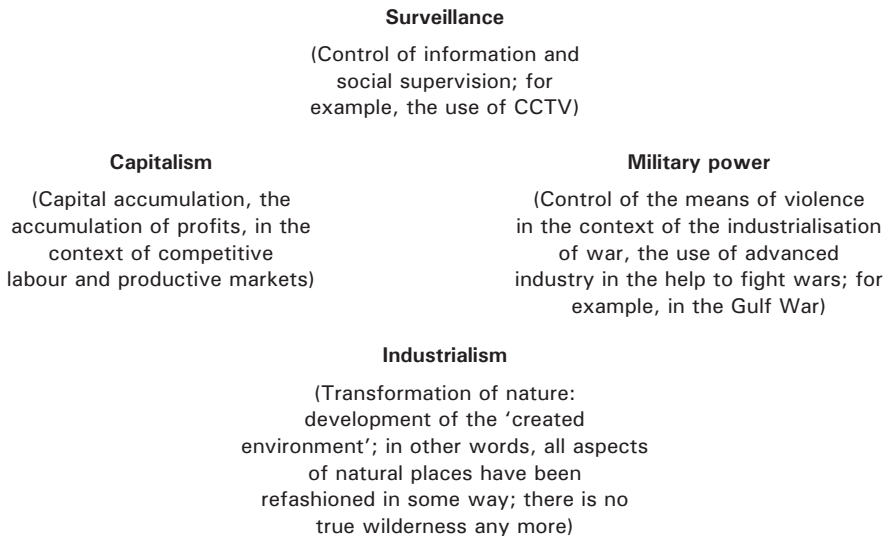true wilderness any more)

Figure 2.1   *The institutional dimensions of modernity (Giddens 1990: 59).*

also an important concept in political sociology. The meaning of power and
authority has been summarised by Steven Lukes (1978). Lukes explains that,
central to the idea of power is the notion of 'bringing about consequences', not
unlike, for instance, the way in which your sociology teacher ensures that people
in the class hand in their homework. This is about securing compliance, and
compliance can be secured by the use of force or by people choosing to surren-
der to others. When people choose to accept the will of others as legitimate or
right, we can describe the relationship as one of authority. You might want to
reflect upon the different forms authority takes in our lives: religious authority,
moral authority, academic authority, etc.

Power or domination is often thought to be right and legitimate; however,
domination has also been described as a form of repression. In our everyday
lives we have to deal with individuals and agencies that attempt to exercise
power over us, making us do things which they want us to do. In this area we
look at a number of contrasting writers who are all concerned with power and
domination within the modern world; afterwards we shall look at the contribution
made to these issues by postmodern writers.

Giddens on modernity

The clearest outline of 'modernity' is provided by Anthony Giddens in *The
Consequences of Modernity* (1990). In this text he explains that the modern
world has four characteristics, or 'institutional dimensions' (Figure 2.1).

For Anthony Giddens, 'power' is a fundamental concept in the social sciences. By 'power' Giddens means 'transformative capacity'; in other words, the ability to make a difference in the world. In Giddens's view, whenever an individual carries out a social action – by which we understand any action with an intention behind it – that individual makes a difference in the world. The consequences of a social action may go against many other individuals' vested interests. We all carry out social actions, so it follows that we all have power. However, the amount of power an individual has is related to 'resources'. Giddens outlines two distinct types of resources:

- allocative resources – control over physical things such as owning a factory
- authoritative resources – control over the activities of people; for example, by being high up in an organisation like the civil service

All social systems are viewed as 'power systems', and usually this means that they are involved in the 'institutional mediation of power' (Giddens 1985: 9). By this, Giddens means that institutions, such as schools, attempt to control the lives of individual people by the use of rules, which become deeply embedded in our everyday lives. The nation-state, such as France or Britain, a geographical area with recognised borders and a government, is described by Giddens as a 'power container' that has a high concentration of both allocative and authoritative resources. In other words, the state contains lots of institutions, with lots of resources and therefore lots of power. In particular, Giddens suggests that sur-veillance, both watching people and collecting information about them, is essen-tial to maintaining the power of the modern nation-state and to maintaining any social system. As Giddens explains, 'All states involve the reflexive monitoring of aspects of the reproduction of the social systems subject to their rule' (1985: 17).

The modern state gathers all type of information about individual people, such as information about birth, death, income, notifiable diseases and travel over-seas, to name but a few. You might want to ask yourself why the state should be interested in gathering such information about people:

- How much money people earn
- Notifiable diseases, such as tuberculosis
- How many people are in your house on the night of the census?
- If you travel overseas – why do we have passports?

The characteristics of the modern nation-state are outlined by Giddens as 'a political apparatus, recognised to have sovereign rights within the borders of a demarcated territorial area, able to back its claims to sovereignty by control of military power, many of whose citizens have positive feelings of commitment to its national identity' (1989: 303). This passage from Giddens is not the easiest to follow, but its key elements can be defined as follows:

- 'a political apparatus': a leader or government supported by institutions and other forms of organisation

- ○ 'demarcated territorial area': a place or geographical area, usually a country
- ○ 'sovereignty': control over a geographical area, including control over the people who live there
- ○ 'national identity': characteristics displayed by people which identify them with a particular place

All types of *rule* rest upon the mediation of power by the society institutions, and the modern state has become capable of influencing some of the most private and personal characteristics of our everyday lives. The Children's Act 1980, for example, allows the state to intervene in the relationship between parents and children. However, Giddens argues that modern nation-states are without fail 'polyarchic' in nature. This means that they have a set of legal rules which provide individual people with civil and political rights, such as free speech, which gives them a status as a 'citizen'. A key concept that Giddens develops here is his notion of the 'dialectic of control'. By this he means that all people have 'openings' that can be used to influence the activities of authorities that attempt to exercise domination over them. According to Giddens, even the prisoner alone in the cell still has opportunities to exercise power over the jailer; such techniques can involve: harming oneself physically, conducting a 'dirty protest', going on hunger strike, and refusing to wear prison clothes. The 'dialectic of control is fully explored in Area 5, 'Pluralism and Political Parties'.

However, can we accept the claim made by Giddens that all individual human agents have power? Researchers such as Joanne Finkelstein clearly believe that the answer is yes. In her book *The Fashioned Self* (1995), she gives an illustration that is worth quoting at length:

> Clearly, physical appearances are understood to do more than differentiate the sexes; they act as social passports and credentials, often speaking out more eloquently than the individual might desire. … In the following example from Primo Levi, appearances are used as a credential of one's humanity. In his document of the Nazi concentration camps, *If This Be a Man* (1987), Levi described an episode where an inmate of Auschwitz, L, understood even in the torturous circumstances of the camps, that there was power to be gained through deliberately fashioning one's appearance. L went to extreme lengths to cultivate his appearance, so, in the barbaric conditions of the concentration camp where everyone was soiled and fouled, his hands and face were always perfectly clean, and his striped prison suit was also 'clean and new': 'L knew that the step was short from being judged powerful to effectively becoming so … a respectable appearance is the best guarantee of being respected. … He needed no more than his spruce suit and his emaciated and shaven face in the midst of the flock of his sordid and slovenly colleagues to stand out and thereby receive benefits from his captors. (Finkelstein, 1995: 136)

Here Finkelstein raises a number of interesting points; for example, that *appearances* can be seen as *social passports and credentials*; that L can have power; and that L has at least some control over the course of his own life. This is surprising given the circumstances in which L finds himself.

Max Weber – power, coercion and authority

Max Weber (1864–1920) was one of the founders of sociology, and he always described himself as a *bourgeois theorist*. According to Marianne Weber's biography (1926) of her husband, Weber could never have joined a socialist party, as he believed that private companies were the only source of power in society to challenge the state civil service and therefore guarantee freedom and liberty. As Weber himself explained, 'Superior to bureaucracy in the knowledge of techniques and facts is only the capitalist entrepreneur, with his own sphere of interest. He is the only type who has been able to maintain at least immunity from subjection to the control of rational bureaucratic knowledge' (Weber, 1978: 225).

Marianne Weber suggested that three assumptions underpin Max Weber's political analysis:

- *Economic individualism*. In other words, Weber believed in economic freedom, the freedom to buy and sell whatever one wanted in the market place.
- *Civil and political freedom*. In other words, Weber believed in civil rights such as the rights to free speech voting.
- *Personal autonomy and responsibility*. In other words, Weber believed in individual people taking responsibility for their own actions. The state should not control the life of the citizen.

The starting point for Weber's political analysis was the important distinction between power as *authority* and power as *coercion*. For Weber, authority is the legitimate use of power. Individuals accept and act upon orders that are given to them because they believe that to do so is right. In coercion, on the other hand, others force people into an action, often by the threat of violence, and this is always regarded as illegitimate. However, we might wish to question some of the assumptions that Weber made in this area.

But can we accept the distinction between coercion and authority, that Weber makes? Are Weber's conceptions of 'coercion' and 'authority' always based upon the point of view of the people with power? Richard Bessel's review of David Irving's book *Nuremberg* (1997) raises some of these issues:

> For more than three decades, David Irving has been engaged in a crusade to rescue the Nazi leadership from the enormous condescension of posterity, and to demonstrate that the Allies committed terrible crimes against the Germans. …
>
> At various points, Irving attempts to pin responsibility for crimes during wartime on the Allies – not denying what the Nazis did, but insinuating that the Allies bear a substantial share of the blame. Characteristic of his approach is the following passage about 'the Nazi "extermination camps"':

'At many camps liberated by the British or Americans, including Buchenwald, Bergen Belsen and Dachau, they found and photographed for posterity disturbing scenes of death from starvation and pestilence – scenes which should not, in retrospect, have surprised the Allied commanders who had spent the last months bombing Germany's rail distribution networks and blasting the pharmaceutical factories in order to conjure up precisely these horsemen of the Apocalypse.'

Almost reasonable, after all, the bombing certainly was brutal, brought about the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent people and caused untold suffering. But one does not have to be a militant supporter of 'Bomber' Harris or a moral relativist to point out that the bombing, horrible as it was, was part of a campaign to win a war which, after all, neither Britain nor the United States started, and that incarcerating and murdering Jews in Dachau was not. …

Irving's text contains a number of photographs that have never been published before. Probably the most disturbing is a black and white photograph, from the United States National Archives, of the execution by American soldiers of 'regular German soldiers', shot against a wall, at Dachau shortly after the camp's liberation. Perhaps the most telling, however, is the colour photograph of the grave of Rudolf Hess – Hitler's deputy ('a dedicated, upright ex-aviator', according to Irving), which, as Irving makes a point of reminding us, 'is permanently heaped with flowers from all over Germany'. (Adapted from Bessel, (1997, 8: 14) 1997:).

Richard Bessel clearly believes that the actions of the Allies had authority and the actions of the Nazis did not. However, the significance of the photograph of the execution of the German soldiers casts doubt on this view, as does Irving's reminder that Rudolf Hess's grave: 'is permanently heaped with flowers from all over Germany'.

Issues of coercion and authority affect us all in many aspects of our everyday life. Clive Harber outlines the Weberian distinction in relation to schools:

The teacher asks a pupil to do something for him which is rather out of the ordinary, like stand on one leg and write 'I am a Martian' on the board. The pupil, having complied, and they always do, the teacher asks why the pupil did what he did. Answer: 'because you told me to.' Teacher: 'Why do you do what I tell you to even when it's completely lunatic?' It's not far from here to the idea of authority as the right to influence others when they recognise your right to do so; i.e. the use of power is recognised as right and proper. Following this the teacher then describes how, due to the incessant droning of the teacher's voice, one of the pupils falls asleep at the back of the class and remains unnoticed until waking up in the dead of night long after the school has been locked up. It's a stormy night, the wind is howling and the school feels very spooky. All of a sudden, the sound of heavy footsteps in the corridor! They get closer and closer. The door creaks open and a hairy misshapen arm appears around the edge of it. … It turns out to be the pupil used to illustrate authority and crazed by a thirst for revenge. He threatens to set about the second pupil with a huge, nasty club unless they write 'I am a Martian' on the board. The second pupil is then asked what they would do. Answer: 'comply'. 'Why?' 'If I didn't I'd be physically assaulted' – the use of power i.e. the ability to influence somebody, even against their will. (Clive Harber, ''The Best of the Social Science Teacher' ATSS 1995: 72)

In a similar fashion, Maya Angelou in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* draws upon her own personal experience in Weberian fashion:

Crossing the black area of Stamps, which in childhood's narrow measure seemed a whole world, we were obliged by custom to stop and speak to every person we met, and Bailey felt constrained to spend a few minutes playing with each friend. There was joy in going to town with money in our pockets (Bailey's pockets were as good as my own) and time on our hands. But the pleasure fled when we reached the white part of town. After we left Mr. Willie Williams' Do Drop Inn, the last stop before whitefolksville, we had to cross the pond and adventure the railroad tracks. We were explorers walking without weapons into man-eating animals' territory.

In Stamps the segregation was so complete that most Black children didn't really, absolutely know what whites looked like. Other than that they were different, to be dreaded, and in that dread was included the hostility of the powerless against the powerful, the poor against the rich, the worker against the worked for and the ragged against the well dressed. (Angelou, 1984: 24–5)

Max Weber: the three types of legitimate rule

For Max Weber, there are three 'ideal types' of legitimate rule. Weber developed the ideal type as the starting point for a research project, and it is one of the most misunderstood methodological devices in the social sciences. The ideal type is a list of characteristics that the researcher considers the most significant. What is most significant is based upon the informed personal opinion of the researcher, a basis which Weber terms '*value relevance*'. From this starting point, the researcher constructs a model that is used to evaluate bureaucracies in the real world. Those who criticise Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy on the grounds that it differs from bureaucracies in the real world have clearly misunderstood the role and purpose of the ideal type as a methodological device. Weber's critics could be said to have different informed opinions about the nature of the bureaucracy.

Charismatic authority is the first of the three types of legitimate rule discussed by Weber, and it is concerned with how a political order can be maintained by the force of a leader's personality. Often such leaders will be seen as having supernatural powers or qualities. Weber explains that this form of authority is 'resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person and of the normative pattern or order revealed or ordained by him' (Weber, 1978: 215).

Traditional authority is the second type of legitimate rule discussed by Weber; it is concerned with how a political order can be maintained by the constant reference to customs, traditions and conventions. As Weber explains, this type of authority is: 'resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under rule' (1978: 215).

Rational legal authority is the third type of legitimate rule outlined by Weber; it is concerned with how a political order is regarded as *legal* in the eyes of the population. Weber explains that this form of authority is 'resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of that elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands' (1978: 215). Rational legal authority is then a structure for making decisions, and the legitimacy of the structure is maintained by reference to a legal code. In addition, for Weber the legal code within rational legal authority is based upon 'natural law'. Weber's argument is that whenever people interact with each other they make expectations of each other's behaviour, and these expectations form a 'normative order'. In other words, Weberian natural law is a form of non-religious morality. This normative order puts pressure on people to behave in particular ways, and this becomes codified (written down) as a set of legal rules. The example of an ideal type of rational legal authority that is discussed by Weber is the bureaucracy.

Rational legal authority is legitimate because there is a set of legal rules, but you might want to reflect on the question, 'Why do people obey the law?'. Do people obey because they fear the consequences of getting caught, or do you accept that the Weberian concept of 'natural law' has some validity?

Weber argued that modern government inevitably means government by bureaucracy. This means that in any nation-state the politicians are seen to run the country; however, the implementation and interpretation of political decisions is carried out by the civil service. However, in Weber's view, the bureaucracy always lacks political leadership. There is a need, he claimed, for a strong parliament as a guarantor of individual rights and liberties. For this reason, Weber was always in favour of political democratisation, notably arguing in favour of votes for women. Weak parliaments produce extreme ideological divisions between the parties, a development which Weber termed 'negative politics', because it was little more than ideological posturing, while the state bureaucracy often took the important decisions.

Max Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy

An ideal type is a useful model by which to measure other forms of administration. This model contains the following characteristics:

○ The organisation is in the form of a hierarchy
○ Its operations are governed by a system of abstract rules
○ The ideal officials conduct their tasks without friendship or favour to any clients
○ All bureaucrats have a fixed number of recorded duties
○ Employment in the bureaucracy is based upon qualifications
○ From a purely technical point of view, this form of administration has the highest degree of efficiency

Bureaucracy

In Weber's analysis, there are two forms of bureaucracy which can be identified. The first one is built upon 'consent', whereby rules emerge through a process of agreement. This form is clearly regarded as 'legitimate', an example of it is liberal parliamentary democracy. The second form is 'punishment centred' and is clearly based upon the imposition of rules as an end in itself. It is concerned with the need to extract obedience from a population, as exemplified by the role of the 'secret police'. Clearly, the latter form of bureaucracy is not regarded as legitimate in the eyes of the people under its control. This form of bureaucracy was not fully investigated by Weber, but was looked at many years later by Richard Sennett (1980), (see below). The significance of Weber's ideal type spread far beyond the narrow study of political organisations. Weber made the very large claim that because of the process of rationalisation spreading into all areas of social life, all organisations in all areas of social life appear to be bureaucratic in nature.

According to Weber, the bureaucracy is both the most rational and the most efficient of all forms of administration. All forms of bureaucracy need rules. Modern organisations make use of quality assurance programmes or systems which are rational in exactly the way that Weber described them; examples include BS 5750, ISO 9000 (Quality Assurance Standards), and Investors in People, which all involve the establishment of systems to ensure that procedures are carried out. Quality is understood as making sure that the formal rules are followed.

The influence of Weber in this area of sociology is substantial. Since Weber's pioneering work, organisations have been defined as social units that aspire to achieve particular objectives or ends which they are structured to promote. In other words, organisations have been deliberately put together to carry out a specific task. They are usually bureaucratic in nature, and they usually carry out their function rationally.

All bureaucratic organisations were defined by Martin Albrow as 'Social units in which individuals are conscious of their membership and legitimise their co-operative activities primarily by reference to attainment of impersonal goals rather than moral standards' (Albrow, 1977: 1). To a large extent, Albrow's definition of bureaucracy is simply repeating Weber's earlier definition.

Organisations can be divided into a number of types depending upon what they do.

Total institutions

'Total institutions' is a term defined by Erving Goffman (1962) to describe five distinct types of institutions in which people live and work within a closed community, under fixed supervision, together with a rational plan which points towards a fixed number of goals. A mental hospital, for example, may have the goal of curing

the patients. Examples of total institutions include such diverse organisations as armies, boarding schools, prisons, mental hospitals and leper colonies. People entering these institutions are subjected to 'rituals of degradation' in which both the staff and the inmates attempt to destroy the individual self of the newcomer. In other words, they must lose their individuality, and become like the inmates, who appear as a 'batch' to the outside observer as Goffman describes.

Voluntary associations

Voluntary associations provide a setting for people who share common interests. Again there are diverse examples to draw from: political parties, New Social Movements (non-class-based movements such as animal rights protesters), and local sports teams. As we shall see in our area on Marxism and elite theory, according to Robert Michels (1949) (1876–1936), all organisations are inevitably oligarchic; in other words, within any organisation we will find a few people who make the key decisions while the rest of the membership is powerless. Michels termed this the 'iron law of oligarchy', by which he meant that no organisation could ever be democratic or allow true participation in decision making by its members.

Postmodern organisations

The postmodern organisation should contain de-demarcated and multi-skilled jobs. Unlike the Prussian-style bureaucracy as outlined by Weber, the postmodern organisation should be 'de-Prussianised'; it should be free of formal rationality, loosely coupled and complexly interactive; it should be a 'collegial formation' with no vertical authority, but with forms of 'networking'. These networks should reflect the needs of the new 'cultural and social specialists' and cultural capital, and allow the specialists to resist control by traditional bureaucracy.

In a 'post-Fordist' world, which has an uncertain or postmodern feel to it, new forms of pluralistic or non-hierarchical organisation are possible. People can work within quality circles, in which workers are not constrained and powerless, as they would be under some form of Taylorist scientific management. They are not 'deskilled', as Braverman would suggest, but work within structures which empower individuals by allowing democratic participation in decision making. According to Frederick Taylor in his book *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), nineteenth-century management had little or no understanding of the techniques or skills needed, or the time it took, to produce a product. Managers were generally unpleasant to people who looked as if they were not busy. Taylor termed this form of management 'ordinary management'. Workers attempted to undermine ordinary management in the following two ways:

○ Natural soldiering – all individuals tending to do as little as possible
○ Systematic soldiering – work groups putting pressure on individual members to conform and work to an agreed speed

Scientific management empowered managers by giving them a full under-standing of all aspects of the production process. This allowed management to select the right people for the job. Production could be broken down into the simplest of tasks, which workers could learn in a very short period of time. Management would measure how much time was needed to perform each task, and individual workers would be given financial incentives to work as quickly as they could. This management style was most vigorously adopted by Henry Ford in his production of the model T car, and became known as 'Fordism'. This started the process that Harry Braverman (1974) was later to describe as deskilling, in which as the work tasks were broken down, workers lost both their skills and control of the planning of work tasks.

In contrast, postmodern organisations:

○ Encourage initiative, autonomy (independence), flexibility (people have a range of different roles), multi-skilling (people have a range of different skills), decentralisation (people can make decisions within localised teams), and flat-ter hierarchies
○ Yet retain a core of detailed rules and procedures, with a centralised overall structure of control, with careful monitoring of performance

If we take the postmodern college as an example of a postmodern organisation, its lecturers should be 'cultural and social specialists'. As new professionals, they should be the major carriers of the postmodern consciousness. We shall explore many of these themes in Area 6, 'New Social Movements'.

Formal and informal organisations

All organisations have both formal and informal aspects. The formal organi-sation contains the strictly laid-down patterns of authority, rules and procedures. It has a high degree of rationality and makes the most efficient use of the resources available to it. It aims to produce maximum predictability. The informal organisation includes friendships and personal relationships. Formal organi-sations have

○ A well-defined, durable and inflexible structure
○ A well-planned hierarchy
○ Clear channels of communication
○ A specified job for each member
○ Well-defined objectives

Informal organisations have

○ A loosely organised, flexible, ill-defined structure
○ No defined goals or objectives
○ No clearly defined relationships

The goals of organisations are difficult to measure; long-term goals may have to change while short-term goals may compete with each other. A long-term goal might be to maximise profits, but this may have to change if a company needs to recruit highly skilled workers in the short term. In this sense, it might be better to have an organisational structure which is less durable but which can change to meet the needs of its stakeholders better in new circumstances. This idea formed the basis of what came to be known as *contingency theory*.

In contrast to Weber, Henry Mintzberg (1979) argued for what he called 'adhocracy', which is a fluid and flexible administration based upon teams who form their own rules; like the informal organisation, this organisation does not attempt to standardise the activities of its members. Adhocracy gains the advantages of the informal organisation, that is, its flexible search for better ways of working in the face of new contingencies or circumstances and its innovative teamwork. These may take the form of quality circles that give individuals opportunities to develop their skills in a number of different areas.

The dangers of bureaucracy

As we suggested, for Weber, bureaucracy was precise, soulless and machine-like, a technical instrument for achieving preconceived goals. In addition, argued Weber, bureaucracy has an inherent tendency to exceed its function, and to become a separate force within society. Underpinning the growth of bureaucracy was the process of *rationalisation*, in which relationships between people were becoming more impersonal and dehumanised than in traditional societies. Life in the modern world was losing its meaning because of the process of rationalisation; for this reason, Weber was highly critical of the spread of bureaucracy into almost every area of modern life. In terms of political institutions, Weber believed that the spread of bureaucracy was a potential threat to democracy in the modern world, as the state bureaucracy became a more powerful and independent group in society.

It was for this reason that Weber could never be a socialist and always supported capitalism as an economic system. In capitalist societies, large companies are always bureaucratic in nature, and these private enterprise bureaucracies will compete with the state bureaucracy to hold power and influence in society. It follows, therefore, that in capitalist societies this competition ensures a degree of political competition and democracy.

The officials of the bureaucracy held a set of beliefs or a code of honour, which Weber termed its *Amtsehre,* including:

- A sense of duty to their office
- A belief in the superiority of their own qualifications and competence
- The view that parliament was a mere talking shop
- The view that they were above party politics

○ The view that they were the true interpreters of the national interest
○ Loyalty to interests of their own, which Weber terms their *Staatsraison*

The source of power for the bureaucracy is based upon knowledge, and by this Weber understood technical expertise protected by secrecy. Weber did not like the spread of bureaucracy; he saw it as a product of the wider process of ration- alisation that was making all aspects of human life calculable and predictable but also lacking in meaning and feeling. In Weber's view, we know very little about how products in our society really work; for example, we know how to turn on the radio, but most of us have no idea how radio waves are generated or turned into sound. By contrast, do not so-called primitive people have a much greater under- standing of their environment?

Nevertheless, as we saw in our exercises above, many sociologists could argue that Weber's conceptions of power, authority and legitimacy are too restricted in their focus. In contrast to Weber, Steven Lukes (1974) argues that power has three dimensions or appearances:

○ Decision-making, which is concerned with the activities of the decision mak- ers, such as government departments
○ Non-decision making, which is concerned with the way in which power is used to limit the range of decisions that the decision makers can choose from, when people come into contact with an ideology
○ Shaping desires, which is concerned with the ways in which individuals can have their attitudes and beliefs manipulated so as to accept a decision which is not in their own true interests, as when people have their ideas manipulated by an advertising campaign

One of the most damning critiques of Weber's conception of bureaucracy is found in Zygmunt Bauman's book *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989):

In Weber's exposition of modern bureaucracy, rational spirit, principle of efficiency, scientific mentality, relegation of values to the realm of subjectivity etc., no mechanism was recorded that was capable of excluding the possibility of Nazi excesses … more- over, there was nothing in Weber's ideal types that would necessitate the description of the activities of the Nazi state as *excesses*. For example, no horror perpetuated by the German medical technocrats was inconsistent with the view that values are inherently subjective and that science is intrinsically instrumental and value free. (Bauman, 1989: 10)

I propose to treat the Holocaust as a rare, yet significant and reliable, test of the hid- den possibilities of modern society. … Modern civilization was not the Holocaust's *suf- ficient* condition: it was, however, most certainly its *necessary* condition. Without it the Holocaust would be unthinkable. It was the rational world of modern civilization that made the Holocaust thinkable. The Nazi mass murder of the European Jewry was not only the technological achievement of an industrial society, but also the organizational achievement of a bureaucratic society … bureaucratic rationality is at its most dazzling once we realize the extent to which *the very idea of the* Endlosung *was an outcome of the bureaucratic culture.* … At no point of its long and tortuous execution did the

Holocaust come into conflict with the principles of rationality. The 'Final Solution' did not clash at any stage with the rational pursuit of efficient, optima; goal implementation. On the contrary, *it arose out of a genuine rational concern, and it was generated by bureaucracy true to its form and purpose*. (Bauman, 1989: 12, 13, 15, and 17)

In contrast to this view, Guenther Roth, an eminent Weberian scholar, has said of these views that his disagreement is 'total' and that he could not agree with one sentence, because 'Weber was a liberal, loved the constitution and approved of the working class's voting rights (and thus, presumably, could not be in conjunction with a thing so abominable as the Holocaust)' (Bauman, 1989: 10).

In contrast to Weber, the work of Michel Foucault (1977) does explore fully the parameters of power that Lukes suggests. In addition, Foucault explores the issue of legitimacy that Weber first raised; Foucault's argument is, however, very different.

Michel Foucault – power, legitimacy and authority

Foucault developed what he called a 'capillary' model of power in which he attempted to understand the 'relations of power' by looking at struggle and resistance. In contrast to the Marxist conception of power, which is based upon the idea that the economic power of class is the only significant factor to be analysed and discussed. Foucault argued that there are a number of important struggles that are independent of class relations: those over gender, sexuality, madness, criminality and medicine, to name but a few. Foucault suggests that these struggles share a number of characteristics:

○ They are *transversal*; in other words, these struggles are not limited to any one place or any one class – such as the struggle for gay rights
○ They are concerned with resisting the effects of power on bodies or lives – as we find in the holistic medical movement
○ They are concerned with resisting the role of government in individual self-formation
○ They are concerned with opening up and making clear how power is used in a secret way to change people – as in the case of the militia movement in the USA
○ They are concerned with the politics of self-definition and self-formation – as in the women's movement
○ They are concerned with resisting the imposition of external standards of taste and decency – as in the case of the Internet
○ These political struggles are local and personal in nature – as in the case of road protesters

There are a number of common themes running through Foucault's work. His central concern was with how human beings are made into subjects within

the modern world. What Foucault means by this is he is concerned with how individual people become both citizens of a state and the effect that this has on them as people. In addition, Foucault is concerned with how people become subjects of investigation for 'new' sciences such as medicine, psychiatry, and psychology in the search for the causes of 'abnormality', the search for answers to the question of what makes some individuals sick or mischievous.

Let us start with 'the state'. For Foucault, the state is a political structure that emerged in the sixteenth century. The state attempted to look after the interests of everybody within the whole community. Towards this end the state started to gather information about all forms of human activity: birth rates, death rates, unemployment, public health, epidemic diseases and crime. All of these phenomena could be indicators of a serious threat to the community. Gathering statistics about the population became a major activity of the modern state. Data collection by the state forms an important part of what Foucault refers to as bio-power (the monitoring of a range of trends that may form a threat to the community). Bio-power, along with a number of new developments in disciplinary technology (new forms of control over the bodies of people), can be viewed as the dark side of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment is usually thought of as a period in history which gave rise to new concepts in politics, philosophy and science that not only stressed 'reason', rationality and freedom but also questioned the ignorance of tradition.

In his introduction to *The Foucault Reader* (1986), the friend and colleague of Foucault, Paul Rabinow, explains that within Foucault's work it is possible to identify what he calls three 'modes of objectification'; in other words, three organising principles used by Foucault to explain how individual human beings become subjects: dividing practices, scientific classification, and subjectification.

Dividing practices

Dividing practices involves the exclusion of people who are viewed as a threat to the community. The most famous example of this was the forced withdrawal of lepers from the community into leper colonies during the Middle Ages. This exclusion did result in the eradication of leprosy from Europe; therefore, it was believed that other threats to the community could be solved by similar exclusions. The poor were forced into workhouses. Criminals were put in prison. The insane were excluded into mental hospitals, or 'ships of fools', which were said to be ships loaded with the insane who were sent out to sea to recover their sanity. Although the ship of fools may have been mythical, it is certainly true that the mad once played a recognised role within the local community, as in the village idiot, for example, a role that was taken away from the insane when they were locked up in secure institutions. Foucault turns on its head the idea of progress in relation to the treatment of the mentally ill; the common-sense assumption that the more we progress, the more we care is not true, in Foucault's eyes.

Scientific classification

The Enlightenment brought with it a number of new sciences which were concerned with understanding the 'nature' of individuals. In addition, these new sciences defined what is 'normal' so that the 'abnormal' could be treated. The key tool for these new sciences was the *examination* (such as the medical examination given by a doctor). This tool transformed visibility into power, classified people into *cases* and trapped them in a straitjacket of documentation, that clearly stated whether or not they were normal. Foucault refers to this as 'hierarchical observation': 'a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible' (Foucault, 1986: 189). For example, in psychiatry, the doctor has a notion of the 'normal' mind and classifies individuals as 'normal' or as exhibiting a range of various diseased states. In Foucault's work, power relationships are based upon surveillance and need not be based upon physical punishment.

Subjectification

Subjectification is concerned with the process of self-formation, self-understanding and the way in which conformity is achieved. Foucault is concerned with what it means to have a self and how we as individuals create ourselves. Individuals define themselves as 'normal' in relation to a number of factors: sex, health, race and many more. This is primarily concerned with what Foucault was to call the 'power of the norm', all individual actions are now within 'a field of comparison' which both pressurises and *normalises* people. Normal people could legitimately regard themselves as members of a homogeneous social body – society.

If we take the example of gender, there is great pressure placed upon individual people to behave in a 'normal' way. A female child is expected to behave in a 'feminine' fashion. She may be told by her parents that she is 'not a baby now', and must change her behaviour. When she goes to school, she may be told that she is 'not at home now', and must change her behaviour. When she goes to work, she may be told that she is 'not at school now' and must change her behaviour. In this way the behaviour of women is shaped to 'fit in' with expectations of normal female behaviour.

The philosopher Jeremy Bentham designed the panopticon that Foucault draws upon in his work, but it was never built. Bentham outlined a number of positive things which the panopticon could offer: moral reform, preservation of health, invigoration of industry, reduction of public burden, lightening of the economy and abolition of the poor laws. Was the panopticon unnecessarily harsh, cruel or dehumanising? However, Angela Carter (1984) does attempt to give her readers the feel and flavour of what life in a panopticon would be like:

With the aid of a French criminologist who dabbled in phrenology, she selected from the prisons of the great Russian cities women who had been found guilty of killing their husbands and whose bumps indicated the possibility of salvation. She established a community on the most scientific lines available and had female convicts build it for themselves out of the same kind of logic that persuaded the Mexican *federales* to have those they were about to shoot dig their own graves.

It was a *panopticon* she forced them to build, a hollow circle of cells shaped like a doughnut, the inward-facing wall of which was composed of grids of steel and, in the middle of the roofed, central courtyard, there was a round room surrounded by windows. In that room she'd sit all day and stare and stare and stare at her murderesses and they, in turn, sat all day and stared at her.

During the hours of darkness, the cells were lit up like so many small theatres in which each actor sat by herself in the trap of her visibility in those cell shaped like servings of *bab au rhum*. The Countess, in the observatory, sat in a swivelling chair whose speed she could regulate at will. Round and round she went, sometimes at a great rate, sometimes slowly, raking with her ice-blue eyes – she was of Prussian extraction – the tier of unfortunate women surrounding her. She varied her speeds so that the inmates were never able to guess beforehand at just what moment they would come under her surveillance.

By the standards of the time and place, the Countess conducted her regime along humanitarian, if autocratic lines. Her private prison with its unorthodox selectivity was not primarily intended as the domain of punishment but in the purest sense, a penitentiary – it was a machine designed to promote penitence.

For the Countess P. had conceived the idea of a therapy of meditation. The women in the bare cells, in which was neither privacy nor distraction, cells formulated on the principle of those in a nunnery where all was visible to the eye of God, would live alone with the memory of their crime until they acknowledged, not their guilt – most of them had done that, already – but their *responsibility*. And she was sure that with responsibility would come remorse.

(Carter, 1984: 210–11)

The significance of the panopticon was outlined by Zygmunt Bauman in his book *Freedom*: '*Panopticon* may be compared to Parsons' laboriously erected model of the social system. What both works seek is nothing less than a model of well-balanced, equilibrated, cohesive human cohabitation, adaptable to changing tasks, capable of reproducing the conditions of its own existence, producing maximum output (however measured) and minimum waste' (1988: 20).

Jurgen Habermas: legitimation crisis

No discussion of the legitimacy of any political regime would be complete without a discussion of Jurgen Habermas's influential book *Legitimation Crisis* (1976). In this text Habermas outlines the core structures of society and the crisis tendencies

Table 2.1   *The rank order of socio-cultural, political and economic systems*

Subsystems	Normative structures	Substratum categories
Socio-cultural	Status system; subcultural forms of life	Distribution of privately available rewards and rights of disposition
Political	Political institutions (state)	Distribution of legitimate power (and structural force), drawing upon available sources of organizational rationality
Economic	Economic institutions (relations of production, ownership) or non-ownership of means of production. With owners in one class and non-owners in another class	Distribution of economic power (and structural force); available forces of production – the forces of production are all the things from nature needed to produce commodities

Source: Adapted from Habermas 1976: 6

Table 2.2   *Possible crisis tendencies*

Point of origin	System crisis	Identity crisis
Economic system	Economic crisis	–
Political system	Rationality crisis	Legitimation crisis
Socio-cultural system	–	Motivational crisis

Source: Habermas 1976: 45

which can emerge within these structures. He is particularly interested in how liberal-capitalist societies are sensitive to problems of legitimation. He argues that most discussions of the legitimacy of regimes are written from a 'systems' perspective, and Habermas starts his analysis with a discussion of the notion of a 'social system'.

Social systems are 'life-worlds' that are 'symbolically structured'. The *life-world* is the 'world of lived experience' the taken-for-granted world of common-sense assumptions that people share within a given community. Inside the social system, Habermas identifies three subsystems: the socio-cultural system, the political system and the economic system. Within each of these subsystems, Habermas distinguishes between 'normative structures' and 'substratum categories', as shown in Table 2.1.

Habermas argues that crises within a social system can emanate from several different points, as shown in the Table 2.2:

An *economic crisis* emerges when the required number of consumable values is not produced – in other words, consumer demands are not fulfilled. A *rationality crisis* emerges when the required number of rational decisions is not produced – in other words, people question the nature of the decisions made by the state, and lose faith in the ability of institutions to make rational decisions. A *legitimation crisis* emerges when the required number of 'generalised motivations' is not produced – in other words, the encouragement for people to act and think in

a supportive way about the system is absent. A *motivational crisis* emerges when the required number of 'action-motivating' meanings is not produced – in other words, the motivation for people to act becomes dysfunctional for the state.

Unlike Weber, Habermas did not believe that rationalisation was an unstoppable process.

The discussion of a 'crisis' within a social system must take into account the relationship between system integration and social integration. A crisis is brought about by a combination of the following two factors:

○ *Social integration.* This is concerned with how individual people relate to each other within the system of institutions.
○ *System integration.* This is concerned with the 'steering performance' of the social system, the ability of the social system to deliver to individual people protection from an uncertain and often hostile environment; system integration also includes the ability of the social system to maintain its boundaries.

If social integration and system integration break down, the social system will not only lose legitimacy but may also collapse. People within what was the social system will be unable to interact with each other in a civil fashion. It could be argued that such a situation did emerge in the 1990s.

Balkanisation

The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have been analysed by Stjepan G. Mestrovic in *The Balkanization of the West: The Confluence of Postmodernism and Postcommunism* (1994). In contrast to modernist thinkers such as Jurgen Habermas, Mestrovic argues that the world is becoming less cosmopolitan, less global and less rational. It is moving towards smaller and smaller units with greater hostility towards each other. This is the process of Balkanisation, which is both a postmodern phenomenon and a rebellion against the grand narratives of the Enlightenment – it is a process of disintegration running counter to the optimism of the Enlightenment. A key element of Balkanization is 'narcissism' – whereby people feel that their religion, group, city, cultural identity, etc. is superior to all others – which unites with the collective feeling that 'others' have ambitions to exterminate their group. Such narcissism leads directly to hostility and the breakdown of society. The USA and Western Europe are not Balkanising along geographical lines, but along ethnic, gender and other lines. Among others, many Native Americans, Kurds, Haitians, Bosnians, Croats, and Palestinians feel that the Western notion of universal human rights has passed them by.

In both the West and the former Soviet Union, the popular belief was that the indigenous system was superior to the other. In the former Soviet Union, the culture which helped to maintain the belief in the superiority of communism has not gone away, but is now manifest in aggressive forms of nationalism and ethnic

conflict, which in the West is referred to as 'tribalism'. To explain this attempt to 'demonise' the opposing culture, Mestrovic draws upon the work of a number of writers such as Lasch, Riesman and notably Jovan Raskovic's *Luda Zemlja* (*Crazy Land*) (1990), which discusses the narcissistic nature of communism. When communism came to an end, people in the former Soviet Union experienced a collapse of hope and self-esteem; their ontological security was shaken. Taking his starting point from Freud, Raskovic makes the following claims:

○   The Croats have a castration anxiety; they are driven by fears that something will happen which will humiliate them and take away what they have worked for
○   The Muslims have an anal frustration that makes them desire to be clean and good
○   The Serbs have Oedipal conflicts that make them aggressive and authoritarian

The interaction between these forces is what underpins the Balkan conflict; hence violence is inevitable. However, Balkanisation, as we suggested above, is not confined to Eastern Europe. In the USA, for example, there was rioting on the streets of Dallas after the 1993 Super Bowl. Black Americans pulled white Americans out of their cars and beat them up – in revenge for slavery, they claimed. According to Mestrovic, Dallas is not Sarajevo, 'but disturbing similarities exist already' (Mestrovic, 1994: 109). In addition, the postmodern television camera induces the evils found within traditional cultures to come to the surface. Television does not induce racism, sexism or violence, but enhances a need for faith, and this is asserted as fundamentalism.

The social system exists within an environment. The environment has three distinct parts according to Habermas. The first part is the 'outer nature', which is concerned with the natural resources available to the social system. This control over nature gives the social system power. The second part is the 'inner nature', which is concerned with the development of norms and other acceptable ways of behaving as passed on via processes of socialisation. These include the ways in which parents bring up their children, and the ways in which the mass media influence people's ideas, opinions and beliefs about the nature of society and the way it works. The third part comprises other social systems that may benefit as well as threaten the present social system. The benefits may include such things as trade relationships, while the possible threats include military action. Either way, the relationships between social systems must be managed in some way.

Social systems, then, exist within an environment. Inside the environment the social system is involved in production, to satisfy the material needs of its members, and socialisation of its people into acceptable ways of behaving and believing. Inside the system, people relate to each other in rational ways that form 'reconstructable patterns'. In other words, individuals are made aware of appropriate ways of relating to each other, and whenever similar situations present themselves to an individual, that person can draw upon the appropriate pattern of behaviour to cope with the situation in a stress-free or mutually beneficial way.

Habermas's suggestion here is that the goals and values within a social system are limited by the development of 'world-views' – ways in which individuals within a social system make sense of their world by the meanings or moral systems that they share. These 'structures of intersubjectivity' (by which Habermas seems to mean 'sharing'!) also help people to secure an identity. A system's level of development in these areas is then dependent upon the openness of institutions in allowing individuals to learn. This seems to mean that social systems are limited by the amount of knowledge that the people within a social system possess.

With growing theoretical and practical insight, people within the social system have greater control over both the system's outer nature and its inner nature. Habermas refers to these developments as the system's 'steering capacity'. Steering can be problematic and produce crisis effects within the social system if issues or problems arise that are regarded as beyond what could possibly happen. Very high rates of inflation, investment strikes or large numbers of people dropping out of the labour force would all be examples of this. Ideas of 'what could possibly happen' are defined by 'organisational principles' which are highly abstract and which 'limit the capacity of a society to learn without losing its identity' (Habermas, 1976: 7). The 'organisational principles' are a framework of ideas that provide individuals with certainty about the system.

Habermas and liberal capitalism

Although Habermas outlines several types of social formation, he spends most of his time discussing the liberal-capitalist social system. Within this system, the 'principle of organisation' is the relationship between labour and capital. In other words, the type of society that we live in is dominated by the relationship between workers and employers. Within our social system these relationships have become 'depoliticised' and 'anonymous'. By this, Habermas means that the power of the state is used to make the conditions for capitalistic production. In other words, we have private individuals who own companies that make things for profit; this is usually referred to as 'private sector production'. What the state does is to provide the conditions under which unregulated markets become legitimate in the eyes of the people within the social system. The role of the state is to ensure that the capitalist social system is allowed to continue and to be reproduced again and again over time. As Habermas explains, 'Economic exchange becomes the dominant steering medium' (Habermas, 1976: 21).

Once the capitalist society has been established, the state's activity can be limited to four purposes:

○ To protect commerce – one of the key purposes of the police and the justice system
○ To protect the market mechanism from possible self-destructive side-effects; for example, the dangerous working conditions which damage the health of the workforce and reduce profit margins

- ○ To provide an infrastructure, notably schools, and transport and communication systems, which allows capitalists to be more effective and efficient
- ○ To provide a legal framework for business, banking and an efficient taxation system

In liberal capitalism, crises appear in the form of unresolved economic steering problems. It is commonly assumed that severe economic problems arise because government policies lack competence. Social change becomes unpredictable and this is seen as a direct threat to the living standards of working people and the profit margins of capitalists. There is a strong fear that economic depression will endanger social integration. Workers and capitalists repeatedly confront one another over the nature of their intentions, which, of course, are always incompatible; workers want maximum wages and capitalists want maximum profits. As Habermas explains, 'economic crisis is immediately transformed into social crisis' (Habermas, 1976: 29).

In summary, crises can be avoided by the use of 'steering imperatives'. In the case of economic crisis, the 'steering imperative' may involve increasing the level of state activity in the economy. The purpose of increased state activity in the economy is to enhance the level of mass loyalty to the social system. If this crisis management by the state were to fail, withdrawal of legitimacy would follow.

Case study. Northern Ireland and the absence of legitimate authority?

Northern Ireland was created in 1921 when the rest of Ireland was given self-rule. The majority of the population was and remains Protestant, unlike the rest of Ireland, which has a very large Catholic majority. From 1921 until 1968, Northern Ireland was given limited self-government, with the Stormont Parliament comprising a senate of twenty-four elected members and two ex officio members, and a House of Commons of fifty-two members elected for a five-year period. The province also sent twelve members to the House of Commons at Westminster. This was a period of majority rule and one-party government, and it is clear that during this period discrimination against Catholics was rife. On 24 March 1972, Stormont was suspended and the British government introduced direct rule from Westminster. Since that time, government policy for Northern Ireland has had three objectives:

- ○ To contain and stabilise the problems of the province within the UK
- ○ To create a form of cross-communal political consensus; in other words, to get the two sides of the community to tolerate each other
- ○ To produce structures of devolved government, based upon cross-communal support – if necessary by intergovernmental negotiation, or, as it has been termed, the 'Irish dimension'

The positions of the major political forces in Northern Ireland are the following.

Non-negotiable issues

Constitutional Unionists – the main Unionist parties

1. British sovereignty – that the British government should have sole control over the running of Northern Ireland
2. No institutionalised political or administrative links with the Republic of Ireland
3. Protestant self-determination – the Protestant people in Northern Ireland, should be responsible for their own destiny.
4. Suppression of Sinn Fein and the IRA
5. No power-sharing, as of right, between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland.

British government

1. British Sovereignty
2. Self-determination for the Northern Ireland majority
3. Suppression of the IRA

Constitutional nationalists – including the Irish government and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)

1. Recognition of the Irish dimension in Northern Ireland
2. Need for institutionalised links between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
3. Need for partnership/power-sharing, between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland

Republicans – including Sinn Fein (the political wing of the IRA) and the IRA

1. Irish sovereignty: a unitary Irish state for the whole island of Ireland
2. British withdrawal from Northern Ireland

Adapted from McCullagh and O'Dowd (1986: 4)

Steve Bruce (1986) views the struggle in Northern Ireland as a conflict between nationalists and an ethnic group, the Unionists, who share a common experience and a common historical tradition, of which Protestantism is the common thread. In particular, Bruce sees Ian Paisley as representing the core of traditional Orange-Loyalist culture. This culture stands at the very core of the traditional Loyalist world-view. The Free Presbyterian Church, formed by Paisley in 1946, represents a very conservative form of evangelicalism. Paisley's supporters believe the Pope to be the AntiChrist and the Roman Catholic Church to be undemocratic and supportive of the IRA. Bruce maintains that it is this evangelicalism which gives Unionist politics its distinct identity. Without it, Unionists

Table 2.3 *Crisis in Northern Ireland*

	For Northern Ireland Catholics	For Northern Ireland Protestants
Motivational crisis	Yes/No	Yes/No
Legitimation crisis	Yes/No	Yes/No
Rationality crisis	Yes/No	Yes/No
Economic crisis	Yes/No	Yes/No

would not differ significantly from Catholics. Paisley, in his opening speech (a copy of which was kindly sent me) at the Brooke Talks, which was the start of the current peace process was very keen to point out that 'Ulstermen are not Englishmen living in Northern Ireland.' Moreover, he stated: 'I would never repudiate the fact that I am an Irishman, but that to me is a geographic term in relation to the island where I live. That does not call into question my Britishness.' In contrast, Bruce argues that among Northern Ireland Catholics, national identity has become so secure, and so taken for granted, that it can be separated from its religious base.

In summary, we could argue that before the introduction of direct rule, the political structures in Northern Ireland had legitimacy in the eyes of the Protestant community, but not the Catholic community.

However, can the work of Weber cast any light on why sections of the community in Northern Ireland regard the political structures as lacking in legitimacy? I would argue that Weber's arguments cannot be used to understand the conflict in Northern Ireland, because Weber's conceptions of authority lack a discussion of emotional attachment to a form of political regime.

Similarly, the work of Jurgen Habermas cannot shed much light on why sections of the community in Northern Ireland regard the political structures as lacking in legitimacy. I do not think the problems of Northern Ireland be diagnosed in the following tick-the-box way, which is where Habermas's argument leads us (Table 2.3). Like Weber, Habermas assumes that the state should have legitimacy in the eyes of the people under its authority; without this legitimacy, the state cannot survive.

In contrast to the work of both Weber and Habermas, stands the work of Richard Sennett (1993), to whom we shall now turn.

Richard Sennett: authority

One of the most thought-provoking accounts of power and authority is provided by Richard Sennett (1993). In sharp contrast to Weber, Sennett argues that authority

need not be legitimate in the eyes of the population. For Sennett, authority is associated with a number of qualities: 'assurance, superior judgement, the ability to impose discipline, the capacity to inspire fear' (Sennett, 1993: 18). Above all, power has the image of strength, it 'is the will of one person prevailing over the will of the other' (Sennett, 1993: 170). For Sennett, 'authority' is both an 'emotional connection' between people and at the same time, a 'constraint' upon people. These bonds are seen as 'timeless' rather than 'personal'. Emotional bonds often mesh people together against their own personal or financial benefit. Even though the desire to be under some authority is regarded as indispensable, people fear the damage that authority can do to our liberties. Moreover, the emotional bonds of authority are seldom stable in nature.

In contrast to Weber, who believed that authority was built upon legitimacy in the eyes of the people who were subject to the control of the authority, Sennett argues that: 'We feel attracted to strong figures we do not believe to be legitimate' (Sennett, 1993: 26). How could this be? Taking his starting point from Freudian analysis, which argues that the mass of the population are always in danger of regressing to earlier phases of psycho-social development, Sennett maintains that we have a psychological need for the comfort and emotional satisfaction which a resolute authority can provide. Freud believed that we saw such a 're-infantilization of the masses' in Europe in the 1930s. These Freudian ideas were taken up and developed by the Frankfurt School, most notably in Theodore Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality*. This influential psychological study is discussed in most psychology textbooks. In essence, it suggests that there is an F scale, passed on from parents to children, which can be measured. This scale includes hostility to outsiders, racism and sexism, hostility to people who are artistic or sensitive, a feeling of wanting to be conventional, belief in superstition and fear of authority. Those with a high score on the F scale are likely to become fascists. David Held (1980) suggests that the following nine personality variables make up the implicit pre-fascist tendencies:

- Conventionalism: rigid adherence to conventional, middle-class values
- Authoritarian submission: submissive, uncritical attitude towards idealised moral authorities of the in-group; in other words, the need to conform to authority
- Authoritarian aggression: tendency to be on the look out for and condemn, reject and punish people who violate conventional values
- 'Anti-interception': opposition to the subjective, the imaginative, the tender-hearted
- Superstition and stereotyping: the belief in mystical determinants of the individual's fate; the disposition to think in rigid categories
- Power and 'toughness': preoccupation with the dominance-submission, strong-weak, leader-follower oppositions, exaggerated assertion of strength and toughness
- Destructiveness and cynicism: generalised hostility; defamation of what it means to be human
- Projectivity: the disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world
- Sex: exaggerated concern with sexual 'goings-on'

Although Sennett sees much of value in these Freudian-inspired analyses, he argues that there is a need for us to look at 'the actual give-and-take between the

strong and the weak' (Sennett, 1993: 25–6). He outlines a number of 'bonds of rejection' which people use to counter authority, but which simultaneously allow us to depend upon the authority and be used by that authority. There are three such 'bonds of rejection'.

The first 'bond of rejection' is 'disobedient dependence'. This is a situation in which people rebel 'within' authority, rather than 'against' authority. By this, Sennett means that individuals become obsessed with what the authority thinks of them as individuals. Such rebellion often becomes a bid for recognition. Sennett explains that the key practice within disobedient dependence is 'transgression'. This practice involves not simply saying 'no' to the authority, but proposing an alternative which the authority cannot accept. However, the proposed alternative is rarely a real alternative; its purpose is to obliterate some aspect of the past which the individual did not like. To counter this transgression, the authority uses a range of strategies, which Sennett refers to as 'reverse responses'. The main reverse responses is 'indifference' to the subordinate's demands and requests. Reversed responses discredit points of view from the people who are subject to authority, suggesting that they have nothing 'intrinsically meaningful' to say. This puts pressure on the subordinate to bid for recognition, leading to emotional dependence. Individuals have a need to be given some recognition by the authority. Hence, according to Sennett, rebellion takes place within the terms and conditions laid down by the authority, and for this reason the emotional control of the authority tightens.

In other words, people rebel within authority usually in an attempt to gain recognition from the authority. The authority is in a position to enhance the self-esteem of the individual by giving recognition. If the authority refuses to give recognition, the emotional ties which constrain those under the authority become even tighter, as the need for recognition becomes greater, the longer it is denied.

The second bond of rejection is 'idealised substitution'. Here the authority serves as a negative model; whatever the authority does, the opposite is what we want. In this case, the authority also serves as a key point of reference, and we become dependent upon it. We have a fear of losing our link with authority, because without it we have no moorings. Individuals secure themselves with any anchor authority can provide.

Finally, the third bond of rejection is 'the fantasy of disappearance'. Sennett defines the fantasy of disappearance as a form of 'infantile scepticism', according to which 'everything would be all right if only the people in charge would disappear' (Sennett, 1993: 39). However, at the same time, there is a fear that if the authority did not make its presence felt, there would be nothing: 'The authority figure is feared, but even more the subject fears he will go away' (Sennett, 1993: 40).

In summary, people have a fear of freedom.

Table 2.4   *From social action to legitimate rule*

Type of social action		Type of legitimate rule
Zweckrational ⟶	social action motivated by a 'goal' ⟶	rational legal authority
Wertrational ⟶	social action motivated by a 'value' ⟶	charismatic authority
Tradition ⟶	social action motivated by customs ⟶	traditional authority
Affect ⟶	social action motivated by emotion ⟶	

Sennett has a number of interesting things to say about the effects of authority on 'the self'. He suggests that, in response to authority, there is a separation between an 'outer self' and an 'inner self'. The 'outer self' is the self that we present to others in our everyday life; it is our public self, made up of the various roles that we play, such as teacher or student. The 'inner self' is the self of our innermost thoughts and feelings. The 'outer self' obeys the rules of the authority without question, but the 'inner self' does not accept what the 'outer self' is doing. This leads to a permanent feeling of passivity and indifference, as if it were not really me that is obeying the authority; my actions do not really matter because I do not really believe in them.

As we suggested above, in contrast to Weber, Sennett believes that an authority does not necessarily have to have legitimacy in the eyes of those subject to it. However, this is not the only contrast with Weber. For Weber, any social action is an action that has an intention behind it, and there are four types of social action that suggest motives for or intentions behind people is behaviour. Three of these types of social action have corresponding types of legitimate rule, as shown in Table 2.4.

It would have been logical if Weber had developed a form of legitimate authority based upon emotion, but he did not. However, Sennett has done just this; he has developed a form of authority based upon emotion, as may be seen in his notions of disobedient dependence, idealised substitution and the fantasy of disappearance. In summary, in sharp contrast to Weber, Sennett holds that authority need not be legitimate in the eyes of the population.

The postmodern conception of the state

Area 3 will expand on the nature of the postmodern condition, and explore how the world is a very uncertain place because of the rejection of 'grand narratives', such as political ideologies like socialism. However, we need to remind ourselves that in the modern world, people are organised by the state in rational and logical ways. This state organisation is conducted via the education system, which provides people with the appropriate values and beliefs, and the health-care system, which defines the 'normal' body and how it should function 'normally'. This process reached its boundary or end point with the state socialism of the former Soviet Union, in which nature was controlled, rivers were redirected and

people were moulded into a unified identity, in the interests of the collectivity. People are clearly defined as 'normal' or 'abnormal', and those who are not normal will be dealt with in the appropriate way, which may be imprisonment, hospitalisation or execution.

Postmodernists such as Crook et al. (1992) have argued that the postmodern state is a decentred, minimal and fragmented one. In other words, in the post-modern condition, the state does not have the power or influence over people's lives that it does in the modern world. By a 'decentred' state we mean a state which is disappearing. The term 'minimal' means that the state has little influence and is 'fragmented', or broken up into a range of units, some of which are in the public sector and some of which are run by the private sector. This was reflected in the policies of 'deregulation', allowing the private sector to bid for contracts to run public services, such as local bus services, and 'privatisation', the sale of assets from the state sector to the private sector, such as the sale of British Gas. These policies were followed by the Thatcher and Reagan governments in the 1980s and were not reversed by either the Clinton administration in the USA or the Blair government in the UK.

The fragmentation, diversification and disorientation of the state were reflected in what David Ashley (1997) refers to as the forms of postmodern 'civil and voca-tional privatism'. The postmodern condition has dissolved the need for state legitimacy, because we do not expect the state to be able to solve our problems. Moreover, legitimacy in the sense that Habermas discusses it is based upon acceptance of some form of 'grand narrative', or the manipulation of the masses into some common way of thinking again built upon a 'grand narrative'.

Area 3 will outline the nature of the postmodern condition and the concept of the 'grand narrative'. The term 'postmodernism' was popularised by Jean-François Lyotard (1984), who was chosen by the Council of Universities of Quebec in the 1970s to write a report on the condition of knowledge in the Western world. His conclusion was that all 'grand narratives' or 'meta-narratives' are exhausted. In other words, the enlightenment project is completed, and the big ideas such as Marxism and liberalism have nothing of value to say about the world and how it is now organised. In the postmodern condition, such 'grand narratives' as Marxism and liberalism break down, and with this break down we lose the dis-tinction between 'high' culture and 'low' culture; truth and fabrication; morality and immorality. In the postmodern condition, 'anything goes' – calves in formaldehyde become art, Harry Seecombe singing 1950s pop songs becomes religion, and even food and sex become life-threatening. The postmodern world is a very uncertain place. There are no universally accepted ways of behaving, no com-munally held beliefs, no agreed foundations for organisation of our personal, social or political lives. The world becomes impossible to predict, and our lives have an uncertain feel to every aspect of them.

On the one hand, this condition can be very liberating, individuals can con-struct any identity they wish, draw upon any lifestyle, any ideology, that they find

Table 2.5   *Modern/postmodern versions of privatism*

	Civil privatism	Vocational privatism
Modern	Based on familial or personal property ownership	Centred on professional occupational status, regulated by achievement within closed collegially organised groups
Postmodern	Increasingly includes sumptuary consumption, i.e., purchase of commodified semiotic privileges marking cultural distinctions	Includes attempt to promote hyperdiversity value commitment and ability to create new forms of expertise and cultural capital

Source: Ashley, 1997:180.

significant. Individuals are free. On the other hand, this freedom has a dark side. Individuals freed from morality are capable of great cruelty and may see no place in their world for justice, kindness and respect for others. The position of post-modernists also has implications for sociological conceptions of the state.

According to Ashley (1997), vocational privatism is the idea of professional service to the community based upon communal interests, such as district nursing services, while civil privatism is the loss of interest and involvement in careers, leisure pursuits and consumption (Table 2.5).

In the postmodern condition, 'the masses' cannot be manipulated. A post-modern culture is built upon a high degree of diversity and fragmentation. Postmodern politics is a form of politics without the need for legitimation. However, David Ashley takes a contrary view.

Ashley's critique of the postmodern view of the state

Crook et al.'s observations about the shrinking state are seriously out of kilter – first, because the capitalist state was never exactly motivated by the need to succour the needy and, second, because there is, in any case, little objective evidence that western states 'shrank' in power or size during the 1980s. The number of lobbyists in Washington, D.C., did not fall during the decade … nor did the number of civil servants in Britain. … Under Reagan, the U.S. federal budget nearly doubled from $591 billion in 1980 to $1,183 in 1988; during this period public spending as a proportion of national income actually rose. By 1996 the federal government was paying $240 billion a year in interest payments alone on the deficits created by the Reagan and Bush administrations. In Britain, government expenditure increased from £68.5 billion in 1979 to £190.7 billion in 1990. As a proportion of GDP, public-sector spending in the United Kingdom did not fall as much as a single percentage point from 1979 (the year that Thatcher assumed power) to 1993. (adapted from Ashley, 1997: 166)

The argument here is that 'state-centred' theories still have a high degree of validity. We shall turn our attention to these theories.

State-centred theories

According to Roger King (1986), people looked at 'the state' during the nineteenth century as something purposefully 'built' or 'made' that comprised a number of key elements:

- A centralised power within a defined territory – which made use of a number of agencies, including the use of force if necessary, to maintain its power
- A power founded upon consent that should be seen as legitimate authority.

As King explains,

> The nineteenth century constitutional state is characterised by a unitary sovereignty which becomes manifest in a single currency, a unified legal system, and an expanding state educational system employing a single 'national' language. A literary tradition in this 'national' language erodes cultural particularism, and a system of national conscription, which replaced the local recruitment of ancient military units, also tends to overcome 'peripheral' or localist identities. Moreover, this increased monopoly of the means of violence by centralising states is sustained by the extension of the capitalist mode of production. (King, 1986: 51)

The state became bureaucratic, in the way that Weber described, a hierarchy of offices; a division of labour and depersonalised decision making based upon the application of abstract rules. Drawing upon the work of Poggi (1978), King explains that the state 'machinery' developed five distinct characteristics:

- *Civility*. This is most fully explained by Foucault, and it is concerned with the movement by states away from the use of violence and coercion towards forms of control and punishment such as community service, which are more effective and regarded as more legitimate.
- *Plurality of foci*. Politics and the political processes become very varied, with many governmental agencies acting in almost complete independence of each other. This gives the political process a many-sided or diverse feel.
- *Open-endedness*. Political processes have a constant unfinished feel to them.
- *Controversy*. People's views are freely expressed and act as a constraint upon the state.
- *Centrality of representative institutions*. The division between the state and society is clearly defined; the parliamentary assembly or parliament constitutes *the state,* and the electors constitute *the society*.

In state-centred theories, the state is assumed to be the most powerful institution in society, and it is said to have interests of its own, and to act independently to bring about social change. Therefore, the modern state is not the creation of capitalism, or of class relations within capitalism. There is no force in society pushing the state in any particular direction. Michael Mann (1986) suggests that there are four sources of social power: the economic, the political, the military and the ideological. Military threats from the outside world are one of the key factors in the process of state formation; and the state is the only body that can exercise power in a centralised, territorial fashion.

Eric Nordlinger (1981) defined the state as 'all those individuals who occupy offices that authorise them, and them alone, to make and apply decisions that are binding upon any and all segments of society' (Nordlinger, 1981: 11). His argument is that the state has become increasingly powerful and an independent body in society, as a consequence of the emergence of the welfare state, built upon Keynesian techniques for government intervention in the economy and society, in order to improve the living and working conditions of the population. He explains that the state is autonomous

> to the extent that it translates its preferences into authoritative actions, the degree to which public policy conforms to the parallelogram of the public officials' resource-weighted preferences. State autonomy may be operationally defined in terms of the overall frequency with which state preferences coincide with authoritative actions and inactions, the proportion of preferences that do so, the average substantive distance between state preferences and authoritative actions, or some combination of the three. (Nordlinger, 1981: 19–20)

Nordlinger suggests a number of ways in which the state can increase its independence of groups within society:

- By concealed methods of decision making
- By the honours system, providing employment or government deals with private companies to persuade people to accept its proposals
- By using the state's resources to weaken opponents; for example, the much-increased use of state advertising in Britain since 1979
- By changing policy

Perhaps the most convincing state-centred theorist is Theda Skocpol (1985), who outlines a number of examples of states behaving independently in pursuit of their own interests. Building upon the work of Weber and the historian Otto Hintze (1960), she argues that the state has a high degree of autonomy; in other words, the state can exercise power independently of social class or any other social force in the society. Skocpol conceives of state 'organizations claiming control over territories and people' (Skocpol, 1985: 20). The autonomy of the state has its origins in the following:

- The emergence of an inter-state system and the subsequent rise of geopolitical factors
- The development of economic and social relationships that are worldwide in nature
- The activity of political managers who build careers within the state machine
- Periods of crisis which need a collective response

Like Gramsci, she suggests that whether or not a state develops into a powerful independent body depends upon how well organised other groups in society are. However, states do not have to represent the interests of the bourgeoisie in the way that most Marxists would suggest. A strong state can shape the activity of classes, including the bourgeoisie.

However, state-centred theorists are often vague about their distinct theoretical assumptions. They are critical of the assumptions of Marxists, pluralists and elite theorists, but do not make clear their own assumptions about the links between the state and society. At times, they are neo-Weberian, at times neo-Marxist in nature. In addition, as we have seen in the discussion of Weber and the Marxist theorists, Weber considered state bureaucrats to be independent of party politics, and a number of Marxists have expounded the 'relative autonomy' of the state.

Area Summary

In this area we looked at a number of 'modernist' theories of power and the state. We started by looking at Anthony Giddens's conception of modernity and then moved on to outline the distinction that Max Weber made between authority and coercion. All of these theories and concepts are open to question. Did the Nazis have authority or did they rule by coercion? Reflecting on such questions should allow you to develop a critical understanding of the three types of legitimate rule outlined by Max Weber. From this, we moved on to look at the contribution of Michel Foucault to our understanding of power and authority and at Jurgen Habermas's contribution to our understanding of the processes of legitimation within social systems.

Giddens, Weber, Habermas, the state-centred theorists and, to some extent, Foucault all propose theories which fail to consider 'emotion' as a factor in the processes of power. In contrast, the contribution of Sennett to our understanding of authority does attempt to give 'emotion' a central role in our understanding of power. Finally, we looked at the postmodern conception of the state. Postmodernists reject all the modernist assumptions upon which all the theories in this area are based.

The world that postmodernists describe is one of fragmentation, diversification and disorientation, in which the need for state legitimacy has dissolved. Moreover, legitimacy, in the sense defined by the modernist writers we have looked at, is based upon acceptance of some form of 'grand narrative' or the manipulation of the masses into some common way of thinking, again on the basis of a 'grand narrative'. As we shall see in the following areas, postmodernists reject this above all else.

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