Frameworks of Power *by Stewart R. Clegg*
(Sage, London, 1989), pp. xix + 297, £25, ISBN 0-8039-8161-9.

It is a commonplace that power is a central concept for the contemporary social sciences. Yet it is also singularly obscure, elusive, abstract and just plain difficult to grasp. Indeed, a central issue concerning power is whether we need so much a theory of power or an analytical framework to analyse the multiplicity of its mechanisms in modern nation states. It is to our benefit that Stewart Clegg has laboured so assiduously to bring clarity and lucidity to such a concept. It is harder to decide whether he has wholly succeeded in that extremely ambitious purpose. It is harder still to estimate whether the option he has chosen, to develop a theory of power, will help advance the analyses of its operations.

Frameworks of Power is first of all a textbook, with the avowed aim of being used by undergratuate and postgraduate students and their teachers (p. xix). As such, it presents and addresses a multiplicity of debates around power, particularly those which have taken place in English-speaking regions in the 20th century. Yet it is more than this. It is also a developed theoretical statement, an attempt to enunciate and illustrate a particular framework of power around the idea of 'circuits' of power. This tension between exposition and theory, and their potentially conflicting aims of accessibility and rigour, gives this book its specific character, its strengths and weaknesses.

If its object is obscure and its aims not easily reconciled, the remarkable scope of its content introduces other difficulties. Clegg's knowledge and exposition of the field are extremely thorough and border on the prodigious, even granted that the field is to a large extent a product of the text itself. Any book which addresses central aspects of the work of such theorists as Hobbes, Machiavelli, Dahl, Bachrach and Baratz, Lukes, Parsons, Habermas, Giddens, Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe, Michel Callon, Ted Benton, and Michael Mann, and the secondary literature around them, is bound to strike the reader as impressive. Moreover, the range of themes is itself extraordinary: modernity and postmodernity, eltism and pluralism, agency and structure, epistemology and ontology, organisations, resistance, social and system integration, the modern constitutional state, and, above all, 'episodes', 'faces', 'dimensions', and 'circuits' of power. Thoughtfully, the author has surveyed this terrain and the overall argument in the first chapter, which I found myself rereading on completing the book.

The rationale for such scope is not simply a desire for exhaustiveness. The book constitutes its own terrain, and does so in such a way as to make pertinent themes as diverse as poststructuralist discourse theory and realist epistemology. However, were I to seek a centre to the structure of this doubtless decentred, dispersed assemblage of a text, I would find it outside this text in Stephen Lukes' famous work on power.[1] Lukes' book (the text of which now needs updating) is both this one's double, and its other, the one which represents the terminus of a dominant 'modernist' mode of thought about power against which it is necessary to construct a 'postmodern' alternative. To simplify, we can say that it is Lukes' work, its position at the end of a chain which begins with Hobbes, and the reconstruction of an alternative chain from Machiavelli to poststructuralism, which are the keys to the organisation of this book.

Lukes' work is discussed in the fifth of nine chapters. The early chapters summarise and present the dominant modernist line of power analysis, starting

from a contrast between Hobbes and Machiavelli, and then exploring the ramifications of Hobbesian styles and assumptions regarding power in 20thcentury American political science, notably the 'community power debate' and the debate between pluralism and its critics. Such a modernist line is characterised by its individualist and episodic approach to agency, its mechanistic approach to power, and empiricist approach to knowledge. Clegg shows that Lukes' three-dimensional concept of power sought to incorporate the contributions of pluralist and elitist frameworks. Lukes' 'dimensions' of power would include not only the first two dimensions of overt and covert conflict, and the clash of subjectively-felt interests, but also the level of latent conflict, and of the creation of wants which may be at odds with actors' 'real interests'. Clegg shows the affinity between this third dimension of power in Lukes' book and then current concerns around hegemony and ideology.

Clegg's critique of Lukes points in two directions. First, it shows the implication of his work on power in the modernist assumptions regarding agency, and thus prepares the way for the poststructuralist (principally Foucauldian) undercutting of conceptions of power as possessed by unitary, sovereign political forces, particularly human subjects. Lukes (and also Giddens), Clegg suggests, subsumes structure and organisation to questions of the sovereign subject as agent. Secondly, Lukes is shown to challenge the empiricist methodology and positivist approach to social science, but only to adopt a conventionalist epistemology which leads to a form of moral relativism, or worse still, nihilism, with regards to the content of 'real interests'. This aspect of the critique opens the way for a positive endorsement of realist epistemology, and its application to the analysis of power. The concluding chapters of the book thus seek to state and explore various poststructuralist positions (Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe, Callon and Latour) on forms of power, hegemony, agency and so on, and then elaborate a new framework for analysis, called 'circuits of power', and to apply them to the literature on the development of the modern constitutional state.

A brief review of this book is clearly insufficient to judge whether Clegg has succeeded in assembling this new framework of analysis. However, a few preliminary comments can be made. Above all, there is a problem of the degree of compatibility of the diverse elements which make up Clegg's framework. The most obvious example of this would be the attempt to mould an approach to power which rejects or at least suspends questions of epistemology (such as that of poststructuralist approaches to power) with the rigours of a realist epistemology. Indeed, one might wonder whether the strategic Machiavellian conception of power Clegg finds in recent French thinkers requires the rigorous theoretical expression and sound epistemological basis which Clegg seeks to give it. One reading of this literature would suggest that the historical sociological analysis of the formation and exercise of power in various modes of governance would be a preferable option to the kind of global and abstract theorisation of power offered here.

Another difficulty arises from the fact that the status of this book fluctuates between expositional textbook and theoretical statement. Certain inclusions can be justified as necessary in a textbook, though they do not add much to the overall argument (e.g., the fine nuances of the community power debate, Giddens' critique of Parsons, etc.). Again, one wonders whether the realist project of constituting a framework for the analysis of power which better reproduces real relations of power is entirely well-served by a mode of presentation which seeks meticulously to incorporate diverse positions and much

of the secondary literature. The style and mode of presentation of a textbook lead to an unnecessary degree of complexity in the statement of theory.

The textbook mode, then, introduces a kind of syncretic eclecticism into the theoretical endeavour in which problems such as that of Lockwood's distinction between social and system integration are found to have pertinence besides those of Callon's sociology of translation. Yet, even as a textbook, there are some notable shortcomings. Despite its length and the amount of space devoted to textual exposition, more care could be taken to explain precisely Clegg's position on much of the literature he is using, and to explain key terms such as 'obligatory passage points', 'standing conditions', and so on. For example, the discussion of Foucault's analytic of power, with its opposition between sovereign and disciplinary forms, appears sympathetic, but at the end of the discussion we are told that the author prefers the alternative poststructuralist approach of Laclau and Mouffe. Such theoretical moves left me, and may leave other readers, more than a little baffled.

As a textbook, I am not sure how I would use this book. Certainly its early chapters would be useful in a course which sought to cover the mainstream mid-century American political science debates, and Lukes' response. But the second half, with its more speculative emphasis, would be harder to use. Surely only students at a very advanced stage of theoretical development would need to be thoroughly conversant with the relative virtues of realist epistemology over its conventionalist and empiricist forebears. But at the same time, I would want these students to know that the whole question of the necessity of epistemology has been a subject of debate. In any case, an assessment of Clegg's claims in this area would require a high degree of competence in recent philosophy of the social sciences. On the other hand, the exposition of poststructuralism and postmodernism, from which Clegg himself takes considerable inspiration, is curiously foreshortened, and one might feel the need for a more extensive, or more critical, introduction here. Even the application of such 'isms' to the French thinkers discussed here needs to be more fully expanded, as none of them would accept (or in Foucault's case, would have accepted) such tags. Nevertheless, given the right kind of supplementary material and primary reading, one might think of the second half of the book as one for postgraduate students specialising on social theory and issues of epistemology, power, hegemony, and organisation. But we should not pretend that this is a straightforward text. It is complex, it draws upon and alludes to large bodies of literature, it pieces together concepts and themes which are sometimes not fully explained and require further exploration, and it presents this material from its own self-constructed postmodernist perspective for its own specific ends. Thus, it could be said that the book works as a stimulus to further research on current issues and themes of power, the cutting edge of which it defines as the realist view of power in Britain and recent sociology of science in France.

As for the theoretical statement itself, the 'circuits' of power framework is more an anodyne Nietzchianism than a cunning Machiavellianism. Consequently, it stresses the achieved nature of agency, even that of individuals, a move which is bound to disconcert humanists. Yet it offers it adherents the comfort that such agencies are constituted within a 'relational universe of meaning'. We can be assured that the 'death of Man' has not been the 'death of Meaning'! Indeed, meaning is potentially infinite (this is the appeal of Laclau's understanding of discourse) and power would result in an ideological closure or fixity of the 'Infinite play of differences' (pp. 178-9). But just what these infinite possibilites

of meaning are, other than the synthesis of what the previous sociologists say they are, is never quite spelt out. I would suggest, however, that while Clegg wants to be on the side of the calculating, cynical Machiavellians, he might actually be creating the new Leviathan of 'The Organisation'. If so, this would be a subversion of his political intent, and an exchange of strategic thinking for global theory.

To explain this further: for Clegg, power is configured within a triple-level network of circuits. It is most effective when it stays at the most basic, agency level analysed by Hobbesian episodic power relations. Yet it is often obliged to take different routes through circuits concerning social and system integration, which concern rule-fixing and technical or disciplinary innovation, and dispositional and facilitative (instead of causal) power. Through these levels social relations are constituted, agencies enrolled, interests formed and translated, and strategies shaped. Finally, it is here that contestation and control take place by forcing or resisting the passage of power through particular nodal points, or 'obligatory passage points'. My problem, however, is whether the figure of these circuits (on p. 214) is a diagram of the relation of forces from which organisations are composed, or one which presupposes the existence of organisation. In other words, is organisation the compound or reification of relations of force (power, resistance, struggle, etc.), or is it the condition for the circuits through which power is forced to flow? It may be that Clegg has exchanged the complex, descriptive, strategic, open-ended contingency of the analysis of power for the structured, explanatory, closed necessity of the Theory of Organisation.

In short, this is a provocative, difficult, dense, book for specialists, and of restricted use in the teaching of undergraduate students. Whether the book has effectively constituted a realist theory of power, and whether such a project has proved to be worthwhile and useful, will be a subject of much debate for some time hence. Meanwhile, the analysis of power relations will proceed, as both the sociology of science and the historical sociology of the state have shown, without worrying too much about an epistemologically grounded theory of power. If such a theory is ever constructed in such a way as to prove useful, this book may well have formed one of its obligatory passage points.

REFERENCE

1. S. Lukes, *Power: a Radical View,* London, Macmillan, 1974.

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In Sickness and in Wealth: American Hospitals in the Twentieth Century *by Rosemary Stevens*
(Basic Books, New York, 1989), pp. xii + 432, $US 24.95, ISBN 0-465-03223-0.

The function of 'the hospital' has changed through time. In an earlier age it was a place where sick people went to die. However this is not the case now: for some time now there have been dedicated institutions (hospices) which perform this function. The term 'hospital' is now used to describe a short stay institution which, in large part, is associated with the restoration of health, rather than death.