



pragmatic notion that Ellis strives for within Kant's political theory, finds a philosophical and ideological barrier. This notion of freedom stands in flagrant opposition to other notions of freedom as being specifically part of politics (Arendt, H. *The Human Condition*). For Kant freedom provides the essential ingredient to the strength of disinterested publicity and its use of reasoned thought. As Kant himself states; 'that a public should enlighten itself is more possible; indeed this is almost inevitable, if only it is left its freedom' (Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*). Thus freedom in a Kantian sense is the freedom given by the ruler(s) to their subjects, 'to make public use of their reason' (p.16). Ellis chooses not to recognize Arendt's key concept in political theory — 'The *raison d'être* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action' (Arendt, H. *Between Past and Future*). Thus Arendt demonstrates the impotence of Kant's theory of freedom in the political realm.

Despite my reservations surrounding Kant's notion of freedom in the political realm, this book is a thoroughly researched and stunning contribution to neo-Kantian literature. Ellis has not only provided a fresh perspective on Kant, but has also stamped her opinion on the debate surrounding liberal democratic theories of citizenship and deliberative democracy more broadly. Those interested in deliberative democracy, the institution of publicity and the public realm, neo-Kantian political theory, or simply looking for an introduction to Kant's politics would be well served to consider *Kant's Politics: Provisional Theory for an Uncertain World*. Ellis is to be congratulated for being co-awarded the 'First Book Award' 2006 from the Foundations of Political Theory section of the American Political Science Association recently held in Philadelphia, USA.

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**The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World.**

Partha Chatterjee

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This book is an original and important contribution to understanding movements of the excluded in postcolonial societies. The concrete discussion is mainly of India, but the potential relevance is broader, particularly in the



postcolonial world. The majority of the book consists of a series of lectures and related pieces on the formation of 'political society', with a few additional short pieces on globalization, the 'war on terror' and urban cleansing bringing the book to its current length. The book is necessary reading for understanding how the excluded, often operating outside illegality, sometimes obtain a voice in modern states, though there are some problems with how Chatterjee conceives the relationship between social movements and the state.

The central thesis presented in the book is the existence of what Chatterjee terms 'political society'. Chatterjee constructs a binary between two dynamics within the modern state — on one side, theory, nationalism, unbound serialities, citizens, a homogeneous national space, and civil society; on the other, practice, governmentality, bound serialities, populations, a heterogeneous social space, and political society. Drawing on Benedict Anderson, he differentiates unbound serialities — the open-ended imaginary communities of national identity, operating in homogeneous empty time — from bound serialities constructed through mathematical devices such as censuses and by strategies of governmentality targeting particular groups (p. 5). Against Anderson, however, he asserts that the latter form the texture of modern society. 'People can only imagine themselves in empty homogeneous time; they do not live in it. Empty homogeneous time is the utopian time of capital' (p. 6). Nationalism has become the central legitimation of state power since the French Revolution by identifying people, nation and state (p. 27). But it is unsustainable because it requires a certain kind of person and association — the citizen (rather than subject) who has a proper and legal place in society, and civil society as the association of such citizens (p. 33).

In practice, governance rests on population categories — recognition of variables such as ethnicity, religion and caste, and of groups living outside or on the borders of legality — in order to direct projects of social welfare and social control. In the realm of practice, therefore, citizens are replaced with 'populations'. Even in the west, governmentality, with its networks of surveillance and its ethos of instrumentalism and non-participation, has displaced citizenship at the heart of politics. In the postcolonial world, it actually preceded the nation-state (pp. 34–35). Populations are not excluded from politics or outside the state's reach, but nor are they treated as citizens or as members of civil society. Rather, they are seen as entities to be controlled or looked after (p. 38). Hence, the popular experience of politics is an experience of being subject to governmentality as passive and fragmentary politics, not of being citizens. Governments such as India thus seek to construct the very basis they claim, to transform populations into citizens (p. 39).

One problem for this modernist project is the existence of entire population-groups whose social life depends on transgression of illegality — squatters, street traders, fare-dodgers, people who obtain free water and electricity — and



who come to view such resources as land and water as rights in a way the state, with its prioritizing of order, does not (p. 40). The state's obsession with order and property prevent it accepting these people as citizens (pp. 136–137). These populations are likely to mobilize as populations (not citizens), couching demands in terms of welfare rights. Governments seeking popular legitimacy often have to engage and compromise with such popular movements (p. 41). Organizations arise to gain recognition as population groups and to construct moral communities in settings, such as the shanty town, which are outside civil society (p. 57). It is the 'demographic categories of governmentality', not citizenship, which ground the claimed right to squat, and other welfare rights (p. 59). Chatterjee paints a detailed empirical picture of self-organization among squatters and slum-dwellers, with a collective identity approximating kinship and formal organizations such as a Welfare Association capable of collective negotiations (pp. 57–59). To pass from governmental category to political-societal entity, a population group must gain a 'moral content' (p. 75). To succeed in extracting concessions from government programmes, the poor 'must succeed in applying the right pressure at the right places in the governmental machinery' to bend or stretch procedures designed to exclude them (p. 66). The mobilizations might involve 'controlled organization of violence' (p. 139). Often intermediate elites such as school teachers act as mediators between governors and governed (p. 66). 'The urban poor' in post-colonial India 'were frequently tied to the wealthy in patron–client relationships that were... mediated by charitable organisations and even proto-unions', often mobilized around ethnicity or through neighbourhood associations, sometimes as a way for organizations such as the Congress party to head off self-organization (pp. 132–133). The result is that strategic, temporary arrangements are often negotiated with the state (pp. 136–137).

Against the usual privileging of universal citizenship over particular belongings, Chatterjee insists the two are equally legitimate (p. 25). The utopia of nationalism is impossible in a postcolonial world; to achieve democratic inclusion, one needs to dirty one's hands with the particularist questions of governmentality (p. 23). Chatterjee thus both documents and espouses a politics of the governed based on the density and heterogeneity of everyday life. This is to mean a constant negotiation of social arrangements between political society and the state, leading to a persisting ambiguity between national, universal rights and an anchoring of politics in movements of particularity. Ultimately Chatterjee's approach is an endorsement of the 'project of democratic modernity', and attempt to lead this statist project through the 'thicket of contestations' of everyday life (p. 50). To this end, he calls for political society to be embraced. Political society lets 'some of the squalor, ugliness and violence of popular life' into politics, but this inclusion is to be



preferred to the 'sanitized fortress' of civil society (p. 74). It is in political society that an expansion of democratic political participation becomes possible (p. 76). The other modalities of time restricting capitalism, secularism and statism are not pre-modern residues, but rather, products of the encounter with modernity (p. 7). Even in resisting modernizing projects, subaltern peoples have been transformed (p. 51). He also advocates using political society to reform minority communities, democratizing these communities through a border zone between the state and society (p. 128). The state aspect of this process is taken to be necessary to avoid empowering traditionalist and fundamentalist forces (p. 129). In other words, this is a project for deepening the existing democratic system to include the urban poor by means of making the most of political society.

In addition to the material on political society, the book also includes chapters dealing with globalization, Indian cities, and American militarism since 9/11. Chatterjee embraces globalization scepticism — the world is less globalized in many regards today than it was before World War One (p. 87). There has been, however, an increase in global flows since the 1950s, due to financialization of the world economy (p. 88). He thus embraces Hardt and Negri's view of a new kind of stateless empire, with US forces acting more like police than an army (pp. 97–99). This new empire is about 'control, not occupation or appropriation' (p. 101). However, this empire lacks moral legitimacy due to its utterly undemocratic nature; the more it expands the more people resist (p. 104). 'If the United States is the world's only superpower, it must be responsible for its actions to the people of the whole world' (p. 110). Chatterjee criticizes the US government for falling back on familiar tropes of warfare after 9/11 which are inappropriate in a globalized world (pp. 108–109), and denounces the 'war on terror' for attacking minorities and political society (p. 129).

He also discusses a struggle by civil society to reclaim public spaces from squatters and 'encroachers' (p. 130). Since the 1990s, civil society has organized an urban counteroffensive which is a serious threat to political society (p. 140). This is linked to a new imaginary of the information-age city that has provided a mobilizing myth to 'bourgeois' groups (pp. 142–143). In an age of globalization, the business elite tends to become a 'spatially bound, interpersonally networked subculture', living in separate, intensely policed areas with little contact with the rest of society (p. 144). It pursues a project to clear slums, shanty towns, squats and market stalls to make way for exclusive residential areas and office space (p. 146). This development provides a 'formidable challenge' to political society (p. 146).

This is an important intervention in breaking with modernist assumptions and thinking seriously about the actual political forms emerging in the postcolonial world. It is not, however, without its problems. The biggest



problem is that Chatterjee retains an attachment to the modern state and its project of 'democratic modernity', weakening his ability to think societal movements in non-state terms. One result is a failure to deal in any detail with social movements as extra-state or as resistances to state power. With the postcolonial state often acting as a transmission belt for the world system and for neoliberalism, the emergence of movements which directly target corporate power (such as the farmers' movement in Karnataka and the movement against Coca-Cola in Plachimada), or which oppose the existing state as such (for instance, the mass mobilizations in Manipur) are an important part of the Indian political landscape. Similar radicalizations, in which social networks which would previously have been managed through patronage and incorporation become antagonistic to an increasingly neoliberal state, can be traced in recent uprisings in Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador. In fact, in his piece on Indian cities, Chatterjee admits that 'civil society' has mobilized neoliberal discourse to attack and displace the power of 'political society'. One could wonder whether the negotiations with political society which Chatterjee celebrates are not already a part of an older world order, a postcolonial manifestation of the Fordist social compromise which capital and the state have abandoned for aggressive neoliberal policies.

Chatterjee seems to view the state itself as part of the ambiguity of postmodernity, because of its vulnerability to voter reactions and popular unrest. This exaggerates, however, the interiority of the restraint imposed on the state. Against the model of negotiation, one should also note that the state does in fact frequently resort to violence to impose its will, forcing social movements to retreat or resist. Thus the epistemological violence of state universalism turns into a concrete physical and structural violence against the recalcitrant reality of everyday life. That the state is forced to compromise to maintain social peace does not preclude the possibility that its ultimate project is one of total control, as in Martin Buber's analysis for example. The whole point of state universalism is that it refuses to be falsified by intractable particularities, facing alternative epistemologies with an arrogance inseparable from verticality. The result is not a 'tension' but a contradiction between the statist and horizontal/social principles. This contradiction may sometimes be managed in terms of a *modus vivendi* or balance of force, but can hardly be a basis for the inclusive democracy Chatterjee seeks. As for the worry about empowering fundamentalism, often such forces arise precisely because of the struggle for state power and the patronage structures it engenders.

In his empirical accounts, Chatterjee is forced to recognize state violence such as a police assault on a religious sect and violent clearances of street traders, but he does not draw implications from such cases, in fact tending to adopt the state's own instrumentalist perspective in assessing such measures as 'smooth and successful' (pp. 45–46, 61). In another case he discusses squatters



effectively repulsing an attempted eviction by force, without drawing consequences from this. And in another, he admits that statists think communities should not insist on tolerance of certain illegalities (pp. 125–126). But Chatterjee does not draw conclusions from this. The political implication of the state's resort to violence is that the gains of negotiation are unstable and need to be backed up by a serious threat of resistance to avoid being overridden by the statists and neoliberals. In other words, pointing social movements towards negotiation and compromise with an adversary which may not be open to dialogue could lead to political impotence. The constraint of the state by society is undeniably necessary but is consistently resisted by the state. Only if social movements have the capacity to be radically outside, to oppose and defeat the state should it ignore them or try to suppress them, can they operate also in the way Chatterjee hopes.

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### **Critical and Post-Critical Political Economy**

Gary Browning and Andrew Kilmister

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In this well-crafted text Browning and Kilmister present a sophisticated defence of the critical political economy approach developed by Hegel and Marx. They accomplish this first, by analysing the distinctiveness of critical political economy and what it brings to social theory, and second, by analysing the work of six social theorists who have looked at the 'economic' in a radically different way dubbed 'post-critical political economy'. The six theorists concerned are Michel Foucault, André Gorz, Jean Baudrillard, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Nancy Fraser and Tony Negri (in his recent work with Michael Hardt). The authors argue that whereas political economy situates the economy in a broader context, thereby encouraging a broader social theory, the approach adopted by Hegel and Marx demands a radical revision of conventional economic concepts in order to transform the way in which we look at the major issues of social and political life. For the post-critical political economy theorists, however, the sphere of the economic should not be given a 'privileged' place as the principal conditioning factor when trying to understand and transform social life.