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(Die Eroberung) [The Sociological Idea of the State
(The Conquest)]**

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Franz Oppenheimer: Die soziologische Staatsidee. (Die Eroberung) [The Sociological Idea of the State (The Conquest)]

In: Franz Oppenheimer, System der Soziologie [System of Sociology], Volume II: Der Staat [The State]. Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1926, pp. 170-181; translation by Wiebke Keim (CNRS researcher at SAGE [Sociétés, Acteurs, Gouvernement en Europe], Université de Strasbourg)

Unlike the contemporary bourgeois and the Marxist theories of the state, that both agree that states have arisen peacefully through purely internal forces, the sociological view, originating essentially in positivism, the synthesis of Enlightenment and Romanticism, maintains that the state has always arisen from extra-economic violence and almost always from *external* violence; whereby the word 'external' has the double meaning firstly of a violence exercised from outside, by foreign groups, and secondly of a violence which makes use of external, warlike means, in contrast to the intellectual or spiritual violence exercised by intelligentsias, namely priesthoods. In any case, the state does not derive from the "economic" means: labour and equivalent exchange, but from the undeveloped "political" means: robbery or fraud or intimidation or, to use the expression of the penal code, coercion.

It is undeniable that here and there a state appears to be ruled by a priesthood; the great example is Tibet; other states, especially in Africa, are ruled by merchant communities. For the moment we shall leave it undecided whether these are original states and not rather states which had already come into being beforehand in the regular way, so to speak, and have only been transformed by influences which we shall see at work everywhere, even if to a lesser extent. Let us assume for the moment that in certain exceptional cases states can also come into being from within by the application, not of "purely economic", but of political means, i.e. by superior members of the same group.

Such cases, if they did indeed create original states - the non-original ones do not interest us here yet - would not at all conflict with the sociological idea of the state; they only assert that "the" state always comes into being through the subjugation of one group to another; at the same time, it allows as possible that the subjugation occasionally happens, instead of through military, through spiritual force, and that subjugating and subjugated group previously belonged to one and the same frame group.

It is clear that this exception bears a close resemblance to the Marxist opinion, according to which groups of *officials* would have gradually risen to rule. The great school case for this would be China. We want to take this possibility as given for the time being: but the sociological view even then differs decidedly from the Marxist one by the value accent associated with the process. It emphatically emphasises what Marxism must conceal, that even in this initially still hypothetical case it is a question of *violence*, i.e. of a procedure that runs counter to the rule of law and morality. Even closer to the sociological idea of the state is the opinion that it was a successful chief who established rule, and thus the state, over his fellow citizens. This was already the opinion of Herbert Spencer, who, from his decidedly organicist standpoint, could hardly have arrived at a different view¹. In his "The Man versus the State" he writes: "Be it or be it not true that Man is shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, it is unquestionably true that Government is begotten of aggression and by aggression. (...) [w]e find proofs that, at first recognized but temporarily during leadership in

¹ Even before him, Herder was close to this view: "From the original patriarchal conditions of trust between people and prince, despotism develops through the abuse of this trust, which the peoples then try to limit by law. The state comes into being". (According to Rosenzweig (1920), Hegel und der Staat [Hegel and the State], München/Berlin, p. 28). This is v. Haller with a dash of Rousseau.

war, the authority of a chief is permanently established by continuity of war; and grows strong where successful war ends in subjection of neighbouring tribes"².

It should be noted here that Spencer emphasises the development of dominion over the victorious leader's *own* tribesmen. Even if the war does not lead to the subjugation of the neighbours, permanent dominion already arises - it only becomes much stronger after such success. These things occur, and the sociology of the state has to take them into account: but it regards them as *secondary*, and above all is convinced that the primary thing is the rule of the whole victorious tribe over the whole defeated tribe, produced by the happy war.

The Italian sociologist M. A. Vaccaro takes a similar stand. He is of the opinion that the fortunate war chief has usually also become the great magician of his tribe; he has thus united in his hand the two most distinguished sources of power of those remote prehistoric times and, relying on them, has been able to achieve tyranny and autocracy by abusing his office in the bosom of the ancestral group³.

What is absolutely correct about this view is the much attested fact that all "Caesaropapism" promotes the formation of despotic forms of rule more than anything else, even already at a very low level. We shall have to deal with this in detail. But with Seillière, to whom we owe the passage⁴, we consider this opinion to be little probable, nay, entirely refutable. Seillière compares this doctrine with the opposite view expressed by Rousseau in his "discours sur l'inégalité"⁵ and remarks that it is quite improbable; it is much easier to impose one's law on a defeated people than to usurp any power in one's own group. We shall substantiate this opinion, which seems to us to be strictly provable, in the summary critique.

Now, to get beyond these intermediate stages to the actual sociological idea of the state, the idea, so obvious, that the state is the creation of external conquering violence, emerges as a matter of course wherever the state comes into open conflict with other powers. One of the first to express it literarily seems to have been the Protestant monarchomach Hotman. Then, in one of the first conflicts of the young socialism with the bourgeois state, significantly immediately after the latter's first victory under Cromwell, (the groups react, in fact, with the precision of a chemical experiment⁶) the view becomes part of the theoretical confession of the "True Levellers" or "Diggers": so called because they began to dig on unused waste land in order to settle there without the permission of the owners, whose right they did not recognise. They had the correct idea, which so much later their great compatriot Charles Hall expressed again⁷, that the soil barrier⁸ was the actual great cause of social suffering, the original sin, Adam in person, namely "a dam", a blocking dam, an exclusion of people from their natural hereditary property, the land. Gerrard Winstanley⁹ and William Everard, their spiritual leaders, put forward the sociological idea of the state in two pamphlets. They regard themselves as the legal successors of the Saxons expropriated by the Normans; now that the

² Note by the translator : The original quote is in Herbert Spencer, "The man versus the state" (1884). In: Spencer, Herbert ([1884] 1981), The man versus the State. With six essays on government, society and freedom. Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, p. 71.

³ Vaccaro, M. A., Les bases sociologique du Droit et de l'Etat. Paris 1898.

⁴ Seillière, L'impérialisme démocratique, German translation by Schmidt, Berlin 1907, p. 59.

⁵ Op cit., pp. 77 ff.

⁶ System der Soziologie I, p. 970 ff.

⁷ System der Soziologie III., p. 225.

⁸ Note of the translator: "Bodensperre" in German, a term specific to Oppenheimer's economic writing, translates as "soil barrier". In an English-language publication by Oppenheimer himself, he does not use this term, but speaks of "monopolisation of the land". See Oppenheimer, Franz, "Tendencies in recent German sociology", in: The Sociological Review Vol. XXIV, No. 3, Octobre 1932, pp. 249-260.

⁹ Cf. Gooch, G. P., Political thought in England, London, n.d., pp. 122 ff.

conqueror's successor, Charles II, has been executed, they demanded a return of the unjustly-seized land in the name of the natural right as well as the present right of victory¹⁰.

Then, in a sociologically similar situation, the idea resurfaced a century and a half later in France, but as an argument in the intellectual march of the bourgeois class against absolutism. In his famous pamphlet "Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?", the Abbé Sieyès says that the nobility is a special people in the nation, the nation that is represented exclusively by the third estate: "What is the third estate? Nothing! What is it supposed to be? Everything!"" And he refers to a typical Junker, "the historian Boulainvilliers, who in a memorandum (1727) to the Prince of Orleans demanded greater liberties for the nobility, on the grounds that their predecessors, the Franks, had subjugated the Gallic people and founded France"¹¹. And Sieyès also demands restitution not only by virtue of natural law, but also by virtue of the right of the sword, to which the legitimists refer¹².

We have here, in fact, an argument from legitimism which, with the sign reversed, acts like an arrow shooting back at the shooter. Many years earlier an unbiased and highly regarded historian and sociologist had already expressed this, purely in the interests of scientific knowledge, as the simple truth, which indeed it is; moreover it is a truth which could never have been hidden if philosophical ideas of the ahistorical state, and juridical ideas of the non-historical state, had not continually distorted and corrupted the historical ideas of the state as it is in reality.

For Ibn Khaldun, a well-to-do Moor, born in Tunis in 1332, high official of state first in Tunis, then in Morocco, then in Granada, then professor in Egypt, still later in the service of the victorious Timur Lenk, it is palpably obvious how states come into being: all around him victorious tribes of nomads – in Africa and Spain the Arabs, in Asia the Mongols – rule over the alien peoples they have conquered, ruthlessly oppressed and economically exploited. Here the ethnic and linguistic merging that had taken place in Western and Southern Europe and which created the illusion of an original unity did not (yet) exist. So Ibn Khaldūn writes, briefly and concisely, in his celebrated 'Introduction to Historical Science': 'States arise through conquest...; once the land has been seized the followers of the new dynasty, the victorious tribe, must spread over the whole land and occupy ... the castles in the individual provinces'¹³.

A member of the ruling stratum of conquerors and lords had no external occasion to see things through a distorting lens, nor did he have any internal reason to do so. Islam, like the religion of the Nordic peoples, is a religion of war – not, like Christianity, one of peace. Its followers had no need to keep their true life in artificial conformity with their profession of faith by reference to a fiction. The Koran preaches not love for humanity but the domination by the orthodox of the *giaour* by virtue of the natural right of the sword and divine command¹⁴.

To return to Europe, after the Revolution of 1789, perhaps inspired by Sieyès, Count Saint-Simon, the founder of modern sociology and modern socialism, put forward the same idea. And now, at last, it had a powerful effect in its breadth and depth, notably in the skillful form in which his pupils, Bazard

¹⁰ Adler, Georg, Geschichte des Sozialismus und Kommunismus [History of socialism and communism] Vol. I, Leipzig 1899, p. 230. Cf. System der Soziologie III, p. 150.

¹¹ Gumplowicz, Geschichte der Staatstheorien [History of state theories], Innsbruck 1905, p. 278. Cf. Also his "Soziologische Essays" [Sociological Essays], Innsbruck 1899, p. 150 ff.

¹² Cf. System der Soziologie I, p. 989.

¹³ Gumplowicz, op cit., p. 124 ff.

¹⁴ Muhammad says: "The sustenance of my community rests on the hooves of their steeds and the points of their spears as long as they do not till the field; but when they begin to do so, they become like the rest of the people". (Quoted from Neurath, Otto, Antike Wirtschaftsgeschichte [Ancient Economic History] second edition Leipzig, Berlin 1918, p. 20). Apart from the "Doric Table Song", which we will reproduce below, this is the most outspoken and grandiose confession of the "political means of satisfying economic needs".

and *Enfantin*, fleshed it out¹⁵. Proudhon, Comte, probably Carey and certainly his pupil Dühring started from here¹⁶, as did Rodbertus¹⁷, and finally Gumplowicz, who coined the significant term: the sociological idea of the state. The term is even more fortunate than its author knew: according to our firm conviction, expressed again and again, the main task of sociology is not only to prove this idea of the state, but to carry it out in all its consequences. And this means nothing else than to eradicate its adversarial antithesis the "law of previous accumulation", the sociological root of all evils, from the foundations of all, literally *all*, social sciences: not only from political science [Staatswissenschaft], but also from economics, jurisprudence and political history. To them all it is the fundamental axiom¹⁸, and they are all devastated by it, as we have already shown in our economics and will try to prove in this theory of the state [Staatslehre] and later, in a universal historical attempt of the greatest span.

Ludwig Gumplowicz unfortunately burdened his correct doctrine of the state, which he had already shaped almost to full formation, with quite superfluous philosophical and other velleities, which caused even greater difficulties for the acceptance of the idea than the novelty and scope of the thought itself, which not only demanded of the *beati possidentes* of science a complete relearning and the open renunciation of age-old, secure possessions ("The capitalists of the spirit defend themselves against their expropriation", I once wrote about the marginal utility school)¹⁹, but which also made very high demands on the personal courage of the person who was to present it. For nothing can be more seditious ["staatsgefährdend"] than a true doctrine of the state²⁰.

So it was humanly understandable when Gumplowicz's first publication was either secreted, i.e. hushed up, or criticised according to the tried and tested method in such a way that only those harmless philosophical weaknesses were presented, but nothing of what was new and important. And since the person treated in this way became more and more bitter and aggressive, this again gave reason, or at least pretext, to put the uncomfortable and dangerous thoughts on the index. Gumplowicz is a "monist", and not even just a "methodological monist", but a true confessor of the conviction that spiritual-social things are nothing but phenomena subject to natural laws. In the foundation of our general sociology we have shown to what extent this standpoint is correct and to what extent it is untenable. Of course we are entitled to regard all external phenomena, i.e. also social life, which is given to us directly only through our senses, as object of cognition, i.e. with the "mechanical way of looking at things"²¹. But then we must not add anything from our inner knowledge, in other words, we must only speak of movement and change in this observation, but by no means of life and consciousness. This is exclusively a matter of the "psychological way of looking at things" which is born of our introspection, given to us directly, without the mediation of our senses, which we then, by a necessary conclusion, transfer to those beings which we recognise, through external observation, as similar to us: for we also know our body through our senses. That we combine these two perspectives is again necessary for thinking: but we must never confuse them, otherwise we are guilty of "frontier crossing"²². And this is the guilt into which Gumplowicz has

¹⁵ System der Soziologie I, p. 45-46; III, p. 150.

¹⁶ System der Soziologie I, p. 985. See also the late John Stuart Mill (cf. System der Soziologie III, p. 206).

¹⁷ System der Soziologie II, p. 150. Note of the translator: Oppenheimer here refers to Karl Rodbertus-Jagetzow.

¹⁸ System der Soziologie III, p. 208.

¹⁹ System der Soziologie III, p. 131.

²⁰ Read how horrified the splendid old Adolf Wagner, despite his great personal friendship for the author, and despite the highest appreciation for the book, speaks of our "State": it can't really be like that?! (Article „Staat“ [State] in: Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften [Handbook of Political Science], 3rd edition, Vol. VII, p. 727 ff.).

²¹ System der Soziologie I., p. 191 ff.

²² System der Soziologie I, p. 201 ff.

fallen. He is a philosophical materialist like Häckel. And so everything psychic is to him only the natural, natural-law expression of group stratification.

The idea is not absolutely wrong. It contains, in exaggeration, the healthy basic idea of the materialist conception of history, according to which the "ideologies" are nothing but the superstructure above the interests of the group. In general, calculated on the basis of duration and the average, i.e. in "statics", one can probably say that a certain stratification of the group produces certain interests in its members, which now in turn give rise to certain actions. And so one can abstract from the determinate middle link and describe the facts in such a way that a certain stratification of the group necessarily entails a certain action²³.

But, first of all, one must not present things as if the motivation of the people played no role at all in the process, just as if it were a matter of the incidence of a ray of light into a medium (Gumplowicz uses this image)²⁴. Historical materialism must not be understood in such a materialistic way: "If one never forgets Marx's sentence: 'With me, the *ideal* is nothing else than the *material* world reflected by the *human mind* ', then one knows, so as never to overlook it again, that there is no economic causation that does not at the same time *take place in the human mind*"²⁵.

Above all, however, this absolute determination of action only applies to the "static" of society - and this is a methodical *fiction* in the sense of the philosophy of the as-if, an "unreal thought-image"²⁶. In reality, however, the absolute determination does not apply without restriction; events only show strong approximations to this absolute type. For here the "suprasocial personalities", which are not entirely comprehensible to sociology, intervene in events and restrain or facilitate the course of events²⁷. They are the bearers of the new values or the minting masters of old values in a new viable form. This shines through even the view of the best Marxist philosopher of law and the state: "But to this recognition of reality belong... of course also the moral and political values, which causally determine the result - that is, only make it real by acting as causal factors in history. And in that a causal understanding of the historical process proves that certain moral values and objectives are motivated more and more en masse from certain social environments, that they acquire greater and greater social force, the direction of the causal process, which coincides with the ideal, finally results no longer as a coincidence, nor as a construction of the philosophy of history, but as a causal-genetic relation"²⁸. The only thing missing here to roughly reflect our train of thought is an explicit reference to the fact that these moral values and objectives are very often first felt and expressed by

²³ System der Soziologie I, p. 600-601.

²⁴ Gumplowicz, Ludwig, Grundriß der Soziologie [Outline of sociology] Wien 1885, p. 167-168.

²⁵ Adler, Georg, Die Staatsauffassung des Marxismus [The concept of the state in Marxism] Wien 1922, p. 163.

²⁶ System der Soziologie I, pp. 606, 613.

²⁷ System der Soziologie I, p. 615, p. 791 ff. "In public opinion is all that is false and true, but to find the true in it is the business of the great man. He who says and accomplishes what his time wants and expresses is the great man of the time. He does what is the inner and essence of time, realises it" (Hegel, Grundlagen der Philosophie des Rechts [Foundations of philosophy of law], Werke, Vol. VIII, 3rd edition, p. 404). Schelling writes (Schelling, F. W. J., Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums [Lectures on the methods of academic studies], 2nd edition, Stuttgart, Tübingen, 1913, p. 178): "The common mind finds the randomness of occurrences and actions especially justified by the randomness of individuals. I ask, on the other hand, what is this or that individual other than precisely that which has performed this or that particular action; there is no other concept of it; if, therefore, the action was necessary, so was the individual. What, even from a subordinate standpoint alone, can appear as free and therefore objectively accidental in all action, is merely that the individual, of what is predetermined and necessary, makes this particular one *his* act: but incidentally, and as far as success is concerned, he is, in good as in evil, the instrument of absolute necessity." And "genius is only genius in so far as it is the highest lawfulness" (316).

²⁸ Adler, op cit., p. 27.

individuals, by leading, suprasocial personalities - and how could an apostle of Marx not acknowledge that?!

Gumplowicz did not draw these important limitations of the doctrine of socio-psychological determinism, and that is why many things appear exaggerated and distorted in his account. This explains why he thoroughly misunderstands the Aristotelian doctrine, not, as the Romantics do, by misinterpreting his concept of the "family" (here he understands it quite correctly), but in his interpretation of the Aristotelian concept of "nature". He understands the expression that "the state is a product of nature" in such a way that Aristotle had meant to say that it was on exactly the same level as the beehive or anthill²⁹. The Stagirite, however, was certainly thinking of "human nature", i.e. the nature of the soul, even when he spoke of the "slaves by nature": for these did not differ physically from the Hellenes: what predestined them to slavery was precisely their inferior state of soul.

Apart from these velleities, however, Gumplowicz was not only the first to place the sociological idea of the state at the very centre of sociology, but he also immediately developed it in all its main orientations, so that nothing really decisive remained for his successor to do. We have compiled the most important propositions that he tirelessly repeated in various publications:

"Sociology clearly declares that states have never and nowhere come into being in any other way than through the hostile clash of at least two heterogeneous social groups, one overpowering and subjugating the other, and that the development of the state cannot proceed in any other way than through the constant struggle of heterogeneous and different social groups against each other"³⁰. The second proposition gives the motive: "The state is by nature nothing other than the institution by virtue of which the victorious group has its subsistence procured by the defeated group in one form or another. In the eternal struggle of groups, which is governed by natural law, the state is the natural means of securing for the victors the prize of victory to be paid by the vanquished"³¹. This is the only passage we have noticed in which Gumplowicz, who otherwise spoke only of the "need for domination" and eternal antagonism, mentions the economic motive for state formation. Perhaps we are not mistaken if we see in this passage a result of the debate that took place between the Graz Professor³² and ourselves (in the most friendly forms)³³. But even here he still speaks of the "eternal struggle of groups according to natural law". On this point, then, I have not succeeded in curing him of his sociological pessimism, which considered the group and class struggle to be just as "eternal by natural law" as, say, the mutual attraction of the celestial bodies. And yet the change in his view of the motive for founding the state should at least have awakened in him a doubt as to the eternal natural necessity of the class struggle³⁴ and class state. For if the possibility should exist - which he

²⁹ Gumplowicz, Ludwig, Sozialphilosophie im Umriss [Outline of social philosophy], Innsbruck 1910, p. 30. On p. 33 he again has another concept of "nature", namely the Kantian one, where it roughly means "providence"; here the clash appears to him as a means by which "nature tries to realise its intention of producing a bourgeois society administering law". Equates it with the Aristotelian concept and finally, quite naively, with his monistic-naturalistic one!

³⁰ Op cit., p. 33.

³¹ Gumplowicz, Ludwig, Allgemeines Staatsrecht [General constitutional law], Innsbruck 1897, third edition (1907), p. 31.

³² Note of the translator: Ludwig Gumplowicz lived in the city of Graz.

³³ I must emphasise this here because in my "Theorie" (1st-4th edition) I stated that I had "given the essentially constitutional law and philosophy of state doctrine the necessary state-economic supplement". Gumplowicz already alludes to this debate in his "Geschichte der Staatstheorien[History of state theories]", Innsbruck 1905, p. 43.

³⁴ At first he spoke of "racial struggle", but then realised that even the most closely related groups can play the roles of hammer and anvil, and that in the later "classes" there are by no means still exclusively members of the old victor or servant group.

could not exclude - that the economic self-interest of people could be better and cheaper satisfied in another way, then with the motive of subjugation and exploitation the action would also have disappeared, with the cause the "natural necessary" consequence.

The third proposition reads: "We will not go wrong if we first define the state as a natural organisation of rule for the maintenance of a certain legal order"³⁵. Here is the fundament of the sociological foundation of the non-historical juridical state, which is thus given what the purely juridical view, as we know, cannot find: the emergence of at least large parts of the law governing in the state.

The fourth proposition reads: "This relationship (between the two groups) is certainly beneficial and profitable for the whole, i.e. for the newly created social entity - the state. For it establishes the division of labour and paves the way for a higher culture. But at the same time it sows the seeds of centuries of "antagonism", of social opposition and social struggles, which must first be held down by a 'legal order' that has difficulty in asserting itself and will one day be blown up with more or less difficulty"³⁶.

Here we have in nuce the whole *substance of the development of the state*.

The fifth proposition gives the whole substance of *Realpolitik* with equal brevity: "The ruled are in the majority and are held down by the minority of the rulers by means of political art. This art consists in the application of the most diverse measures, which pursue the purpose of maintaining the majority in a state of weakness, so that the minority is superior to it in spite of its numerical weakness"³⁷. Elsewhere, however, it is said: "that all and every historical and public life, all and every politics, is nothing but a struggle of social groups with one another, which confront us in public life as classes and parties"³⁸.

As true as the first proposition is, the second is false. It is not true that all historical and public life is only struggle, that all politics is nothing but class struggle. In every frame group that is not hopelessly disrupted, there lives, in addition to the class interests and the class consciousness that accompanies them, a common interest and common consciousness, which is usually stronger. And so a part of public life and politics also serves this common interest. There are, for example, epidemic, dyke, forest, etc. politics. Even in church, school and labour politics, etc., the common interest has strong roots. It has been necessary to clearly stress class interests and the class struggle in the face of the quite one-sided emphasis on the common interest in bourgeois apologetic literature: but it is equally one-sided not to see or to deny the common interest and the activity of the developed state which serves it. The state is precisely a "mixed form of human relations"³⁹.

Gumplowicz's pupil Ratzenhofer followed the second of his master's directions as we distinguished them here⁴⁰. We have given him a detailed appraisal in the "Grundlegung der allgemeinen Soziologie" [Foundation of general sociology]⁴¹, from which we cannot withdraw a word, despite v. Wiese's judgement that he treated the subject matter "masterfully"⁴², that it "remains his lasting intellectual merit that he has grasped and analysed the essence of politics amongst social activities with certainty and acuity"⁴³. His initial axiom, the alleged existence of "absolute hostility", is a

³⁵ Gumplowicz, Ludwig, Allgemeines Staatsrecht [General consitutional law], Innsbruck 1897, p. 24.

³⁶ Gumplowicz, Ludwig, Sozialphilosophie im Umriss [Outline of social philosophy], Innsbruck 1910, p. 54.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 54-55.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

³⁹ System der Soziologie I, p. 367, 1040. „Mixed from Kratos and Ethos“, Meinecke says.

⁴⁰ Ratzenhofer, Gustav, Wesen und Zweck der Politik [Essence and purpose of politics], Leipzig 1893; Rathenhofer, Gustav, Soziologie, 1907.

⁴¹ System der Soziologie I, p. 362 ff.

⁴² Von Wiese, Leopold, Allgemeine Soziologie [General sociology], München and Leipzig, 1924, p. 131.

⁴³ Von Wiese, Leopold, Allgemeine Soziologie [General sociology], München and Leipzig, 1924, p. 173.

pseudo-law: it rests at least on a hasty generalisation, on insufficient induction, if it is not simply a reminiscence of Hobbes; and, moreover, in few authors does their "personal equation" speak so naively and so annoyingly.

It was our duty to point out with all vigour the errors and excesses of the previous main representatives of the "sociological idea of the state", precisely because we ourselves make the doctrine completely our own in its main features. It was to be prevented that criticism should once again stick to the weak points in order to be able to remain silent about the strengths of the doctrine. It will be the main task of this book to continue along the paths indicated by the creators of the sociological idea of the state, if possible to the end.

Before that, however, the doctrine will have to be confronted with its precursors and opponents in the bourgeois and Marxist camps and critically sustained.