Who is acting in International Relations?

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This edited volume sensitizes readers to a budding divide in International Relations (IR); a shift away from crafting overly-anthropological accounts to describe the practice of international relations (ir) and toward what our editors are calling post-anthropological scholarship.[1] The chief difference hinges on the position of the human element in IR; front and center, in the former, peripheral and de-centered, in the latter. The upshot for patient readers is insight into what the consequences of this shift will mean for IR and ir.

Our chapter constitutes an experiment to test the outer limits of this shift. We ask: how far can we, as scholars, decenter the human element before our models of international relations implode? To this end, we selected 'the state' as our test case. By only analyzing models[2] of the state, we were finally able to dis-inhabit the state of the human element entirely, but, in the process, we were challenged to re-conceptualize many our otherwise taken-for-granted, anthropological assumptions about political agency. No doubt, some readers will be dissatisfied or un-persuaded by our experiment in post-anthropology; admittedly, we had no choice but to scour many, occasionally incompatible literatures to trace-out a fully uninhabited state in the course of our analysis. That being said, we generally believe that our analysis identifies and explores some of the outer limits of what it might mean to legitimately de-center the human

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[1] Regarding merely the label 'post-anthropology'; we are fully aware that this term could quite easily be misinterpreted if taken too far from its orienting context in this edited volume, or if it is taken to be a literal description of our scholarship here. It is important to note that the post-anthropological turn in IR scholarship has nothing at all to do with the long tradition of Anthropology as a discipline, and, coming from the small world of Science and Technology Studies, it is significant for us to be clear that post-anthropology in IR is not a direct challenge to the anthropology of science, which our area of study has done so much to cultivate. From this point forward in the chapter, when we use the terms 'anthropology' and 'post-anthropology' it will be in the same spirit that our editors layout in their orienting introductory chapter, to wit, our title contains the term 'post-humanist', which we see as consistent with this distinction.

[2] Regarding terminology, we slide between model and theory shamelessly, but feel distinguishing between the two is not immediately relevant to our argument or the broader direction of this book.

element in IR. This test in post-anthropology also has an important implication for the relationship that binds IR to ir. One of the enduring quests in IR and beyond is to determine a universal, ontologically sound definition of the state once and for all. However, we now take this as a fruitless, if not reckless, endeavor. One viable alternative direction for future IR research would be to formulate and, ultimately, implement a model of the state that is more consistent with models of the state that are used in ir (i.e., out there in practice). Put another way, in IR, we need models of the state that capture the complexity of how models of the state are actually used in ir. This shift requires not a theory, but an approach to theories – a model of models – and we develop this line of inquiry forthwith.

Introduction

We begin with a post-humanist question about political agency. Who acts in international relations? From state theory generally, and the field of International Relations specifically, one readymade answer is: 'states do' – so long as we assume states to be the high-modern regime of nation-states that so dominantly sorted-out conceptual possibilities of political agency during the 20th century and layed the groundwork for globalization. An alternative approach to global politics, in contrast, searches for political power beyond the state. Contemporary shifts toward neo-liberal and other transnational regimes are reshaping the political landscape that enables entities beyond the state to gain importance in governance. Scholars are, thus, left with two viable options: We can see states as entities capable of acting on the stage of global politics, or we can see states as one of many patterns through which political activity is enacted. As it happens, this dichotomy neatly parallels how agency has been conceptualized in social theory: Either we swallow the bitter pill of essentializing a high-modern model of human nature to understand how monolithic actors like the state establish, maintain, and transform political order, or we join the deconstruction camp and dissect the nano mechanisms, techniques, and discursive patterns that surround and, ultimately, eclipse fully this model of human nature, which will then one day, as Michel Foucault famously stated, be 'erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge

of the sea.'[3] In this chapter about who acts during international relations, we engage this tension and develop a model of the state wherein the human element, as near as we are able, is maximally de-centered.

Over the past 50 years of conceptualizing the state, two dominant theoretical positions have emerged. While one group of scholars conceptualized the state as a kind of *unitary actor*, the other saw it as an *elaborate network*.[4] Both approaches started out as modest research heuristics from complex theoretical traditions, but each was later turned into simplistic sets of aphorisms loaded with assumptions that did serious disservice to their ability to guide research.

One of them, perhaps even the most consequential, is the analytical blending of human nature and political agency: Whatever acts during international relations must be human (or humanlike). Inversely, wherever (political) agency is expressed, human activity must be involved. The *state-as-an-actor* approach can be (and has been) misunderstood as the implementation of a straightforward concept of human nature imported into a conceptual framework for analyzing political agency. In recent IR theory, for example, this is obvious in Alexander Wendt´s aphorism '[s]tates are people, too',[5] which neatly blends together assumptions about human nature, personhood, and state entitivity[6] under the umbrella of agency. Similarly, the *state-as-a-network* approach can be (and also has been) oversimplified as the clear-cut consequence of the wholesale abandoning of high-modern notions for human nature in favor of ascribing agency to regimes of disciplinary techniques, usually, involving voluntary self-regulation.

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[3] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon, 1970), p. 387.

[4] Jan-Hendrik Passoth and Nicholas J. Rowland, 'Actor-Network State' *International Sociology* 25 (2010), 818-841.

[5] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 215–24.

[6] The language of 'state entitivity' is meant to capture a number of ideas all of which settle on seeing the state as a unitary thing, an actor, a concerted source of agency, a unitary political container for political actions, and an autonomous entity from the society it serves. Entitivity, thus, capture a diverse host of meanings, which is both a benefit and liability, depending on the aims of the scholar. For us, it is a point of gravity useful for bringing so many different literatures together with a modicum of coherence.

The result is a deadlock. It is impossible to empirically analyze what kinds of entities act in the field of international relations without applying, subsuming, and then reifying ready-made models from the extant literature at the outset. Ergo, it seems impossible to tell what political agency is – be it state agency, the agency of governmental bureaus, or the agency of non-state entities – without, unfortunately, assuming it *a priori*. State entitivity is the assumption that a state is able to act as a unified thing *and* the assumption that states have the ability and occasional necessity to interact with one another on the global stage. State entitivity implies political agency, and models of state agency are largely built on macro models of human nature, especially in modern Western traditional thought. Some scholars of political theory have repeated, if not reified, this link binding state entitivity, political agency, with human nature, while others fitfully denied it.[7] An alternative position to both would be to see this link as an open, ongoing empirical question, and, we contend, this is our single best avenue to conceptualizing a model of the state that is fully dis-inhabited by the human element. If we want to ask such questions about the state and related political actions and actors, then we must adopt a conceptual framework that does not presuppose their answers, and instead affords us the chance to empirically follow each or any of these possible enactments. In the following, we aim to develop such a framework.

Coming from the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is widely known for its disrespectful restatement of concepts central to sociological theory. Its focus on symmetry[8] has challenged commonly held beliefs that

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[7] See, for example, Paul Abrams, 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State,' *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1 (1988), 58-89.

[8] When first introduced in David Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imaginary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976) in the heyday of the 'Sociology of Scientific Knowledge' (SSK) the focus on symmetry was used to methodologically argue for using the same heuristic framework for analyzing both successful and failed scientific projects and therefore to treat true or false results the same way. When transferred to the study of technological developments and technical artifacts, e.g. in Trevor J. Pinch and Wiebe E. Bijker 'The Social Construction of Facts and Artifacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other' *Social Studies of Science* 14 (1986), 399-441, the principle of symmetry became generalized to include all the artifacts that failed or succeeded in the history of a technology. When early actor-network approaches started using the term, it became even more generalized to become the famous heuristic device to treat all the elements in the heterogeneous networks that shaped the history of a technology at least in the beginning as equal contributors to that

human and non-human agency are different; its insistence on heterogeneity of networks (i.e., networks made of people and things) is an indictment of overly-simplistic, 'anthropological' definitions of social networks. In contemporary (international) political sociology, ANT has been applied to the study of states and political action, offering a potential means to overcome the deadlock in state theory by seeing the state simultaneously as both an actor and a network.[9] ANT also offers conceptual and empirical innovations regarding problems of (non-)human agency, different modes of ordering practices, and the performativity of politics, which are germane to post-anthropological IR. Therefore, it also opens up the possibility of finally overcoming essentializing conceptualizations of human nature in the study of political activity, while also making room for post-humanist conceptions of political agency. As ANT is not at all a ready-made framework that can be applied to any problem or case, this chapter is not arguing for its value as yet another a theory of international relations. The direction we adopt in this chapter is rather to argue for a certain attitude towards research in the study of politics and international relations of which ANT might be seen as a paradigm case.[10] In order to reconstruct the conceptual problems in political science and (international) political sociology, crucially, we begin by opening-up theoretical assumptions, such as the assumption that states are unitary actors, and transforming them into empirical questions. In what follows, we outline how scholars in the state-as-an-actor camp established state entitivity, thus, de-centering the human element, then how entitivity was contested by the state-as-a network camp with an model that de-centered the human element at least as much, and, finally, sketch alternative to both by combining them.

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history: instruments, scientists, machines and users could be necessary actors. To avoid the danger of reifying (and mystifying) these actors, some ANT scholars rather focus on the process of assembling them into multi-faceted networks, a process that was called heterogeneous engineering in John Law 'Technology and Heterogeneous Engineering: The Case of Portuguese Expansion.' In *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* edited by Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes, and Trevor J. Pinch (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987) p. 111-134.

[9] Passoth and Rowland, '*Actor-Network State',* 818-841.

[10] A paradigm, as Thomas Kuhn *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) has argued, is not necessarily a full fledged theory or analytic framework, but exemplary research that helps focus attention and make sense of a vast array of approaches in different fields.

How, When, and Why the State was Granted Actor-Status

Historically, the link binding political agency to state entitivity was not the problem for political theory that it is today. For 19th and 20th century classical liberalism and orthodox Marxism, conceptualizing an autonomous entity called 'the state', and then assuming that it was capable of acting and being acted against, was seen as merely a matter of drawing-up (theoretically) the right blueprints for political practice (normatively). This is, perhaps, unsurprising, because political theory has long been seen as a calamitous cocktail blending together descriptive and normative elements. By the 1970s, neo–statists sought to overcome this conceptual mix by 'bringing the state back in'[11] and explicitly conceptualizing the *state-as-an-actor*.

While political agency is a relatively young idea, state entitivity is an old one. The young Marx conceptualized the state as essentially autonomous from the capitalist class, while the late Marx saw the state as an indentured servant to the bourgeoisie.[12] By the 1960s Marxist theorizing transformed.[13] Gramsci's ideas became germane; hegemony was at the core of inquiry into those powerful ideological mechanisms of coercion used by capitalist welfare states. Now, the state was an instrument; the ideal collective capitalist; the structure that served capitalism no matter who controlled it.[14] This conceptualization of the state as a quasi-autonomous entity emerging from an ensemble of institutions serving various interests was well established already in neo-Marxist theorizing by the 1960/70s.[15]

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[11] See Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[12] Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1843-44)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto (1848)* (London: Penguin, 1998)

[13] Susan R. Golding, *Gramsci: Contributions to a Theory of Post-Liberal Democracy* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1992); Renate Holub, *Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Post-Modernism* (London/New York: Routledge, 1992); Barry Smart, '*The Politics of Truth and the Power of Hegemony*', in D.C. Hoy, *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 157-73.

[14] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971).

[15] Claus Offe, *Strukturprobleme des kapitalistischen Staates: Aufsätze zur politischen Soziologie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1972); Nicos Poulantzas, *Staatstheorie. Politischer Überbau, Ideologie, Sozialistische Demokratie* (Hamburg: VSA, 1978).

But, for some, relative autonomy was not enough.[16] Assuming complete conceptual state autonomy meant states could act and be acted upon in a 'world-historic context' structured by international relationships or conflicts, but also by domestic conditions, and this was not a normative claim, but a theoretical achievement.[17] Gradually, state entitivity was conflated with political agency. But, to neo–statists, and this seems to be forgotten, state entitivity was originally ever a heuristic rather than a conceptual perspective; entitivity was something to search for in empirical data, not something to assume *a priori*. The state for them is not *per se* an autonomous entity. The state gains autonomy – or agency – and loses it in historical context. This insight was a well-spring for comparative research on mechanisms of state power[18] and how state formation and/or war-making shape the institutional environment states operate within.[19] While it ignored the relevance of civil society and gender,[20] another bias developed when actor modeling blended with political conservatism and anti-Marxism during the 1980/90s: This heuristic framework became a taken-for-granted theoretical presumption; scholars no longer searched for 'the state' in analysis, and, instead, assumed it as a starting point for analysis.[21]

Insistence on state entitivity persists ever since, despite convincing research on state engineering projects that draws the existence of the state into question by examining its construction and formation. These works show how nearly any state-run project is born

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[16] Evans et al., *Bringing the State Back In*, p. 4.

[17] Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 290.

[18] Michael Mann, *The Social Sources of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Eric Nordlinger, *The Autonomy of the Democratic State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

[19] Michael Mann, '*War and Social Theory.*' in M. Shaw & C. Creighton (eds.), *The Sociology of War and Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 54-72; Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Charles Tilly, 'Reflections on the History of European State-Making.' in C. Tilly (ed), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 3-83.

[20] Linda Gordon, 'The Welfare State: Towards a Socialist Feminist Perspective.' in R. Miliband, L. Panich & J. Saville (eds), *Socialist Register* (London: SRC Graham, 1990); Jessop, *'Bringing the State Back In (Yet Again)*', 149-153.

[21] Leonard Binder, 'The Natural History of Development Theory' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28 (1986), 3-33; Rianne Mahon, 'From Bringing to Putting: The State in Late Twentieth-Century Social Theory', *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie* 16 (1991), 119-44.

of a menu of possibilities lashed-together and then winnowed down by a variety of actors until a single unified course of action is established and then executed by a much distributed mass of agents and agencies – not as the result of the state's will or interests.[22]

State entitivity endures, we contend, among scholars for conceptual reasons. By linking the neo-statist approach to a particular interpretation of Weber's definition of the state as 'a compulsory political organization with continuous operations [*politischer Anstaltsbetrieb*]' whose 'administrative staff successfully upholds the claim of the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order,'[23] it was also linked to the rising mindset of methodological individualism[24] and, therefore, with a certain understanding of political agency: This mindset saw collective action as the aggregate of individual human action *or* as the activity of collective actors modeled with a certain ideal-type of human nature as its backdrop. Consequently, the behavior of these conceptual entities was modeled after 'homo œconomicus' replete with interests, preferences, and intentions; state entitivity and political agency were united under a largely assumed and inexplicit model of human nature.

Another explanation for the staying-power of state entitivity is that the assumption fits neatly into the commonplace rhetoric of global politics: 'Libya rises up', 'Greece is broke', or 'China copies Germany's patents'. We 'moderns' are accustomed to ascribing political agency to singularized state entities, and it serves as a shortcut for summing-up whole populations, governments and administrations, even national businesses.[25]

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[22] Patrick Carroll, 'Beyond the Regulatory State Idea: The Constitutive State as a Co-production of Science and Government' (Society for the Social Studies of Science. Montréal, Québec, 2007); Bruno Latour, 'When Things Strike Back A Possible Contribution of Science Studies To The Social Sciences.' *British Journal of Sociology 51* (1999), 105-123; Nick Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Nick Rose & Peter Miller, 'Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government.' *British Journal of Sociology* 43 (1992), 173-205.

[23] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology, Volume 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 54.

[24] James Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (London: Belknap Press, 1990).

[25] On 'moderns' see Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Whether or not this shift was fostered by the use of neo–statist concepts in political, journalistic, and everyday discourse: State entitivity and the assumption of its a priori political agency became a presupposition. According to Abrams,[26] sociologists inadvertently reified 'the state' in their analyses, so much so that the practice is now endemic. The state is so alive in our scholarly analyses; one gets the impression that, if we could only get close enough, we could snap a picture of it. Scott's research, for example, describes state-driven planning in 'high-modern' projects,[27] which, in Mitchell's words, makes the state appear like 'a person writ large'.[28] But the reification of state entitivity is not only present in sociological accounts of the state, but also in debates on the study of international relations, culminating in Wendt´s conclusion that 'if we want to have states then it is better they take the form of persons rather than something more amorphous, because this will help make their effects more politically accountable'.[29]

Bartelson and Ringmar have detailed the tendency among scholars to conceptualize the state as both a given entity and an entity that has enough features in common with the type of human actors they are most familiar with.[30] That states can be thought of as entities like human actors acting on the stage of world politics is a common theme already in realist political theory.[31] Assumptions about how this human-like actor will act in international relations can be directly derived from equivalent assumptions about human nature and human agency as old as Hobbes´ Leviathan. With a homo œconomicus model nested deeply in state theory, state entitivity, political agency, and

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[26] Abrams, *'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State.'* 58-89.

[27] James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[28] Timothy Mitchell, 'The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics' *American Political Science Review* 85 (1991), 77–96, p. 83.

[29] Alexander Wendt, 'The State as Person in International Theory, *Review of International Studies*, 30 (2004), 289–316, p. 316.

[30] Jens Bartelson, *The Critique of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Erik Ringmar, 'On the Ontological Status of the State' *European Journal of International Relations* 2 (1996), 439-466.

[31] See Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 186-236; R.B.J.Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 81-103.

human nature blend together such that states become 'unified, purposive, utility-maximising, actor[s]'.[32]

However, these human-like state entities seem to disappear once the empirical analysis begins to trace political agency through bureaucracies, organizations, and regional and local institutions, which is a key insight from a long tradition of pluralist scholars.[33] There is moreover an equally long tradition of arguing that the assumed comparability of 'state agency' (i.e., the conceptual blending of state entitivity, political agency, and human nature) should only be understood as a working metaphor.[34] And it is this metaphorical 'as-if' that Wendt argues against when attempting to re-establish a strong version of the state-as-an actor (even a person) by referring loosely to biological debates on organisms and analytical philosophy when discussing the potential emergence of intentions.[35]

Rejecting State Entitivity by Unweaving the Networks of Stateness
Also emerging from the 1960/70s, but in another scholarly camp, state autonomy was rejected in favor of a new, much distributed model of political agency as manifest in and between citizens as they self-regulate. While neo–statists started with a purely analytic framework, which was conceptually reified afterwards, this approach was a theoretical movement before it became a full-fledged heuristics for interpreting political processes and relations from the 1980s on. It privileges a different vantage point, as it emphasizes the complex and interwoven conditions of statehood as the outcome of a set of contingent and unstable processes of governing citizens, rather than thinking of policy

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[32] de Mesquita, *The War Trap*, p. 87-92.

[33] See, for example, Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); John D. Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

[34] See, for example, Barry Buzan, Richard Little, and Roy Jones, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Robert Gilpin, 'The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism', in *Neorealism and its Critics* edited by Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), Pp. 301–21. Also, Ringmar has argued that the antagonism between assumption and metaphor has been around since Hobbes and Hume: 'While Hobbes thus regarded man as a metaphor for the state, Hume regarded the state as a metaphor for man', Ringmar, *Ontology of the State*, p. 448.

[35] Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics,* 215–24.

decisions and international relations as the outcomes of the actions of large and powerful entities, the state, if it is said to exist at all, is their compound effect.

Scholars of state reorganization now often see the state as a network of actors and agencies; a perspective which offers a fresh, process-oriented view of political structures.[36] The radical theoretical underpinnings of this perspective are crucial to its emergence. Foucault's re-conceptualization of power and his work on neoliberal 'gouvernementalité' set the model in motion, but his vision of the state would go underdeveloped for decades. Power, for Foucault, is neither a capacity of someone 'in power' nor a possession of someone who 'has power'.[37] Applied to state entitivity, no state can be in power nor possess it, so entitivity could be challenged on these grounds alone – but Foucault has more. Power, Foucault maintains, is manifest between us, in networks of influence, constituted by the whole machinery and all the mechanisms implemented to discipline and regulate subjected subjects who then, in turn, self-discipline and self-regulate. In this perspective, there are no states, only stateness (étatisation).[38] Stateness is, at least under modern conditions, the exercise and expression of power. Detailed analysis of the various parts of this machinery has inspired numerous research projects under the label of Governmentality Studies. They reveal that whatever looks like a state is constituted by discursive and disciplinary patterns for human relationships and they becomes a way of linking, in a quasi-Foucauldian terminology, what can be said, done, and seen.

Post-Foucauldians have picked-up and now emphasize the mundane 'art of government.'[39] Also referred to as 'microphysical methods of order', in Mitchel's detailed analysis of political institutions, the art of government captures established networks of disciplinary power that enact 'the organized power of armies, schools and factories, and

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[36] See e.g. Rose, *Powers of Freedom* or Rose and Miller, *'Political Power beyond the State'*, 173-205.

[37] Michel Foucualt, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (London: Allen Lane, 1977); Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality' in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* edited by G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 87–104.

[38] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 106.

[39] Jessop, '*Bringing the state back in (yet again)'*, 7.

other distinctive institutions of the modern state'.[40] The state ceases to be identified as the cause of regulatory techniques and becomes their effect, which is clear in Steinmetz's work uncovering the diverse interwoven processes of state-formation[41] wherein the supposedly monolithic state under construction 'appears as an abstraction in relation to the concreteness of the social', which is, by the way, close to Foucault's insight that:

> If these institutions were able to implant themselves, if, by profiting from a whole series of tactical alliances, they were able to gain acceptance, this was because they presented themselves as agencies of regulation, arbitration, and demarcation, as a way of introducing order in the midst of these powers, of establishing a principle that would temper them and distribute them according to boundaries and a fixed hierarchy (Foucault 1988: 86-87). [42]

Foucault's 'microphysics of power', however, cannot answer a simple but crucial question: Why are states commonly conceptualized as actors, if they are not, in some meaningful way, actors? Foucault's best answer is historical. Populations could be regulated by other institutionalized forms besides states, but techniques of subordinating modern citizens converged under this strange abstraction called the state, hence, under modern conditions, we notice a 'governmentalization of the state'.[43]

How should scholars and politicians answer the same question? Non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations grow in prominence, stabilizing and destabilizing alliances with government agencies across the globe; when states pursue their own de-governmentalization, they no longer resemble unitary entities; all this makes network-based theories of the state even the more appealing to researchers and journalists.[44] Conceptually, seeing states as networks shifts analytical attention to interlinked and interwoven practices that form not states but stateness. And yet, this

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[40] Mitchel, '*The limits of the state'*, 92, 95.

[41] George Steinmetz (ed.), *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[42] Mitchel, *'The limits of the state'*, 95.

[43] Foucault, *Governmentality*, p. 103.

[44] Rose & Miller, *Political Power beyond the State.*

school of thought's counterintuitive use of concepts (e.g., power, governance, governmentality) and its sheer popularity have led to many diverse and sometimes contradictory uses of these terms. This huge corpus on high-modern neoliberal governmentality and the knowledge-power relationship remains incommensurable to any description that views states as actors.[45]

From this perspective, the question of political agency is fairly open. Human nature -- at least in the essentialist position -- seems absent in post-Foucauldian studies of political relations. On balance, however, Foucault's analysis in *The Order of Things* shows how 'humanity' was at the center of re-framing modern discourse in the fields of economics, biology, and linguistics.[46] Still, this small mention of human nature is not enough to establish a full-fledged image of political agency for state actors from Foucault's work. If we then again ask, who is acting in international relations?, we must answer: apparently, no one. This is eerily similar to actor models of the state where humans do not act, the state does. Likewise, the closest thing to agency in a network model must be the interwoven and ongoing enactment of a vast network of mechanisms, techniques, and discourses that generate patterns of self-regulatory human behavior. A huge body of literature under the label of governmentality studies focuses on showing how under contemporary conditions, techniques of self-governing have extended to nearly every corner of modern life. Driven also by the misconception that governmentality was a neologism connecting 'government' and 'mentality',[47] those searching for the subtle traces of this transformation under (post)modern conditions turned the question of 'who acts?' into 'what acts?'. In IR, numerous scholars see this post-Foucauldian perspective as a workable alternative to conceptualizing the international arena in which human-like states act and can be disciplined.[48] However,

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[45] Additionally, seeing states as networks is also often merely employed in a metaphorical sense.

[46] Foucault, *The Order of Things*.

[47] For a critique see Thomas Lemke 'Neoliberalismus, Staat und Selbstechnologien. Ein kritischer Überblick über die governmentality studies', *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 41 (2000), 31–47.

[48] David Chandler, 'Critiquing Liberal Cosmopolitanism? The Limits of the Biopolitical Approach', *International Political Sociology* 3 (2009), 53-70; David Chandler, 'Globalising Foucault: Turning Critique into Apologia – A Response to Kiersey and Rosenow', *Global Society* 24 (2010), 135-42; Jonathan Joseph, 'The Limits of Governmentality: Social Theory and the International', *European Journal of*

Wanda Vrasti argued, convincingly, that employing Foucault's concepts at a global level is invalid; not because the network model is invalid, but because post-Foucauldian IR adopted them hastily without reflection.[49]

States as Actor-Networks

ANT provides an alternative to both positions, especially regarding agency. How can states be singularized actors during international relations *and* vast networks of mechanisms encouraging citizens to self-regulate? The mistake of past conceptualizations of the state and stateness was insistence on their mutual exclusivity.

An ANT approach to states avoids state reification or trivialization through post-structuralist insights, especially that of multiplicity.[50] Searching for *the* ontology of *the* state, we contend, is a waste of time. Instead, with ANT, we attend to ontologies of state. The shift toward state multiplicity is subtle, but important for state theory. As an analogy, we draw on Mol's *The Body Multiple*, wherein 'multiplicity' is expertly deployed.[51] For Mol, the body is at once 'one standing bag-of-meat' and yet only made sense of in different, sometimes competing ways, because 'the body' is at once one thing and many things depending on how it 'registers' on charts, diagrams, reports, films, etc. Crucially, Mol abandoned the search for *the* ontology of *the* body and, instead, attended to the ontologies of body. States and bodies have a lot in common; from Hobbes' original imagery of the state as a humanesque Leviathan to Wendt's contemporary insistence that states are persons (too), the role of bodies has a long history in state theory. Still, for state theory to make the leap that Mol did, we must radically re-conceptualize 'actors' and 'action' for scholarship in International Relations. We have taken the first step in this chapter by recognizing that the state-as-an-actor

International Relations 16 (2010a), 223-46; Jonathan Joseph, 'What Can Governmentality Do for IR?' *International Political Sociology* 2 (2010b), 202-4; Jan Selby, 'Engaging Foucault: Discourse, Liberal Governance and the Limits of Foucauldian IR', *International Relations* 21 (2007), 324-45; Wendy Larner & William Walters, *Global Governmentality. Governing International Spaces* (London/New York: Routledge, 2004).

[49] Wanda Vrasti, *Volunteer Tourism in the Global South. The Self as Enterprise* (London/New York: Routledge, 2012).

[50] Passoth and Rowland, '*Actor-Network State*', 828.

[51] Annemarie Mol. *The Body Multiple* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

and the state-as-a-network are co-constitutive; they are two parts of the same multiplicity; '[i]n In a fitting actor-network twist,' we have elsewhere claimed, 'it is only because states are networks that they can appear to be actors'.[52] We must also create a vocabulary to examine states as actors without recognizing or reifying them as such analytically or literally. We can never again ask 'what is a state?' That is a fruitless dead-end. Instead, we must see states as assemblages, gatherings, and things made of many other things depending on how they register. The state is a multiplicity punctuated into a singularity; the main goal now is to embrace the ontological complexity of this new view, rather than essentialize it away, and we argue this well-knowing that our new direction will require us to navigate some ambiguous and, at times, contradictory views of the state and stateness; new questions emerge, like 'how does one view of the state sustain another?', 'how do our theories of the state square with those models of the state used in practice?', and many more.

Of note, the proposed approach is an attempt to overcome a problem for IR as well as STS. Actor models of the state provided no possible entry point to start studying the infrastructural settings that Rose and Miller called the 'technologies of government.' Network models are more appropriate, but also inadequate. Fashioned from fine-grained studies conducted during the 1980/90s, post-Foucauldians, in rejecting the existence of state agency, missed an opportunity to study the way in which these infrastructural developments were practically bound to notions of state entitivity. In this way, both IR and STS will be served, and, in modest ways, already have.[53]

In ANT, we assume that actors we study exist (i.e., take meaning, exert force, and, therefore, 'act'), but only in relation to other heterogeneous actors variously assembled

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[52] Passoth and Rowland, '*Actor-Network State'*, 826.

[53] The annual conference for volume 42 of *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* took place on 19-20 October, 2013, at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Titled 'Rethinking the Standard(s) of Civilisation(s) in International Relations', this conference also featured an workshop to bring IR and STS scholars together. 'Accounting for heterogeneities in the international: writing symmetry, engaging with criticality' was a double panel and a seminar hosted by *Theory Talks* and *Millennium* following the 2012 Annual Millennium Conference from October 20-22 2012, at the London School of Economics. Conveners included Rocco Bellanova, Julien Jeandesboz, and Peer Schouten. Thus, this valuable link between ANT and IR is already 'under construction'.

in networks. This emphasis on relationality is a way to re-coup the actor-state idea; if it exists, it exists relationally, held-up or held-together in a mess of other actors. This relationality operates horizontally, so that any appearance of vertical scale is, in principle, an artifact of lateral relations. As a shortcut, one might even say that this is the main insight upon which ANT is built. Masses of small, heterogeneous actors become tremendous sources of force, which, like levers, can shift and re-align the various social and material associations that make durable different facets of society.[54] This extends the network-state notion as well by including materiality or the power of non-humans beyond the immediate power of discourse, but without losing sight of the significance of discourse or trivializing it.

If we assume concepts such as 'the market' or 'the state' translate, respectively, to insights like 'markets drive the economy' or 'states act on the global scene', then the conclusion is already written because the ontological insights are assumed in advance; the research, in effect, has already been done. If state entitivity is instead treated as a hypothesis then it is not abstract, assumed, or transcendental. It is *made up* of numerous interlinked mundane practices and procedures that build the state as a unitary actor, or fail to, on the ground or in theory. Thus, for scholars, it is an empirical matter to see how states are enacted. The construction of actor-networks,[55] their maintenance[56] over time, and their eventual or stalled disbandment[57] are the critical

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[54] Bruno Latour. *Reassembling the Social* (London: Oxford, 2005). Of course, we are not the first to notice this: Elements of ANT are readily found in research on statehood. For example, Carroll (2006:14,15) recognizes material agency, and, when applied to matters of state, it becomes clear that materiality shapes and is shaped by discourse and practice in cases such as Mukerji's (1997) gardens, Davis's (1986) demonstrations, and Carroll's (2006:145) bogs. Patrick Carroll, *Science, Culture, and Modern State Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Garden of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).
[55] See, for example, John Law, 'On the Methods of Long Distance Control: Vessels, Navigation, and the Portuguese Route to India' In *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge? Sociological Review Monograph 32* edited by John Law (London: Routledge, Henley, 1986), p. 234-263.
[56] See, for example, Anique Hommels. *Unbuilding Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005); T. Dant, 'The Work of Repair: Gesture, Emotion and Sensual Knowledge'. Working Paper (Unpublished, 2009; available at: http://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/26893/1/work_of_repair_3.pdf); T. Dant, *Materiality and Society* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2005).

processes to observe and account for by tracing the associations made, maintained, and broken. An additionally valuable line of research could attend to the practical matter of how politicians and other individuals speak in the name of an entity called 'the state'. The obvious necessity of alliance-building through enrollment becomes not just something to study but something of practical use to construct boundaries between constellations of networked individuals that buoy the material and cultural practices that give form to states and statehood. The state hypothesis is likely to be constructed from a practical array of concepts that link technologies of government infrastructure to the processes of hiding their nuts-and-bolts beneath entity-like surfaces.

The state, therefore, is and must be spoken for, because 'the state' – a single, unitary actor – does not exist other than as a practically relevant hypothesis occasionally enunciated. We speculate on states' declining relevance, practically and scholastically, but unless we stop encountering its invocation in the material we study, we cannot reasonably assume or insist that there is no such thing as *the* or *a* state. Speaking for the state is not to be understood as merely linguistic, although this does provide a good start. Indeed, actors can enunciate the state in practical ways by counting citizens and quantifying natural resource stores, or by defending territories with strong rhetoric of retribution and installing diplomats who then 'speak for' the state verbatim. States are performed, enacted, or spoken for in various ways by linking the hypothesis of an 'actor-like' state to a certain territory, to procedures of political activity, to a global polity, and to the human beings that are labeled as its citizens. Not unlike scientists who speak for their probes and their objects of investigation in order to make them become real and effective,[58] state spokesmen, who do not have to be human, build-up states as macro entities by speaking for other micro-actors. In this sense, a fence at a frontier 'speaks' for a population that has to be protected in the same way that a politician 'speaks' for the same population that has to be governed – and both protect the idea of the state

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[57] See, for example, Bruno Latour. *Aramis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); John Law and Michel Callon, 'Engineering and Sociology in a Military Aircraft Project: A Network Analysis of Technical Change' *Social Problems 35* (1988), 284-297.

[58] See, for example, Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar. *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

and its role in protecting the people 'it' represents. Only 'in political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king' (Foucault 1988: 88).This raises tangential issues dear to social theory, especially concerns over legitimacy.[59]

Seeing states as actor-networks obviates the need for bogus assumptions, inherited from state theory, that collapse human nature and political agency. It also avoids trivializing the unitary actor model of states by opening it up as an empirical question rather than allowing the deconstructionists to reject it wholesale with their own equally reductive and, at best, reactive approach. Thus, from the actor-network perspective, asking 'who acts during international relations?' must be reformulated into 'how is state agency established, expressed, granted, and transformed?' That question must be answered empirically, in the study of both domestic and international politics. State agency or autonomy are established, maintained, and can dissolve over time, and these achievements and failures are a feature of the vast, widely distributed array technologies of government that (un)enroll, (de)align, and (dis)invoke the state hypothesis. From this vantage point, human nature might indeed appear again, but on the empirical rather than conceptual front. As Latour famously argued in *We Have Never Been Modern*, the ontological constitution of contemporary society separates hybrid masses of agencies primarily by separating human entities from asocial and natural things. The same holds true for states: The Leviathan might have been modeled with human nature in mind, but in a world of increasing hybridization of agency, we can see, from an actor-network perspective, that this is but one possible invocation of political agency.[60]

Conclusion

Assumptions about human nature have influenced conceptualizations of political agency throughout the history of state theory. In this chapter, we showed that the question of

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[59] While an interesting direction for future research, it is beyond scope of this chapter; however, see, for example, Shane P. Mulligan. 'The Uses of Legitimacy in International Relations' *Millennium - Journal of International Studies 34* (2006), 349-375 or Cathryn Johnson, Timothy J. Dowd, and Cecilia L. Ridgeway 'Legitimacy as a Social Process' *Annual Review of Sociology 32* (2006), 53-78.

[60] Jan-Hendrik Passoth, Birgit Peuker and Michael Schillmeier, *Agency without Actors?* (London: Routledge, 2012).

'who acts during international relations?' has been answered (i.e., 'the state'), dismissed (i.e., 'no one'), and subsequently transformed (i.e., to ask 'what is acting?', the answer being 'technologies of government') in extant state models. We documented how states have been conceptualized in scholarly research and elucidated how they are thought of as actors by some scholars and as elaborate networks by others. Both traditions have tremendous utility for understanding the inner workings of public bureaucracies and the global efforts of states during international relations, both approaches appear to be rooted in practical political trends and transitions, and both approaches have resulted in robust bodies of literature.

Seeing states as actors freed state theory from conceptualizing the state either as an instrument of control or as a disinterested mediator between diverse groups. However, this movement toward 'bringing the state back in' has had the side-effect of producing its own problematic interpretations of the state. If the state is out there, why is it that we cannot take a picture of it? If it is a person, why can we not meet him/her? The state has been frequently confused with an actual macro-being of its own – an entity or unitary actor whose actions can be studied by social researchers and abstractly systematized by political theorists.[61] This is also where human nature was blended into understanding this unitary actor's political agency; the state was modeled with a high-modern vision of human nature in mind. This was partly, Latour argued,[62] because it fits our linguistic frameworks that tend to 'humanize' non-human entities, and partly because of an underlying methodological individualism that, transferred to an abstract level of collective action, only allows for modeling actors as entities with intentions, preferences, and interests: a homo œconomicus writ large.

Conversely, seeing the state as a network emerged as an attempt to re-conceptualize the ontology of states. Importantly influenced by post-structural theory, especially by the

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[61] Michel Callon and Bruno Latour, 'Unscrewing the Big Leviathan: How actors macrostructure reality and how sociologists help them to do so' In *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Integration of Micro- and Macro-Sociologies* edited by K. D. Knorr-Cetina and A. V. Cicourel (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

[62] Latour, *We have never been modern*.

works on power by Foucault, analytical attention shifted away from actions attributable to states (i.e., as unitary actors) and toward complexes of interlinked practices that bring about flexible, self-regulating citizens no longer in need of a strong, unitary state. Much less intuitive but no less sophisticated than seeing the *state as an actor*, the *state-as-a-network* model was beset with misinterpretation, which compromised contributions seeded by post-structuralist thought on the state.[63] This is obvious when focusing on the problem of human nature again: For post-structuralists, the 'human' in human nature emerged as a frame of reference to restructure discourse formations in the 18th century. This interpretation of human nature, as a specific historical creation unfit for use in theorizing states, displaces humans from political agency, so that, especially in governmentality studies, we mainly observe political agency as expressed in and between technologies of government that form a complex web, or network, of statehood. We do not reject this position completely, but consider it incomplete given the unquestionably important role that humans play in social life.

As an alternative to both camps, and as a way to provide readers with a view of the state wherein humans are as de-centered as possible without imploding our models, we presented an actor-network approach to states which enables us to acknowledge both and yet embrace neither model of the state by opening them up as empirical questions rather than accepting them as theoretical suppositions. Political agency is, likewise, no longer something to assume or reject as explicitly human or otherwise; instead both humans and non-humans are viewed as equal contributors to political outcomes. With this model of political agency, we can no longer assume micro phenomena to be necessarily fluid, interactive settings; macro phenomena can no longer be anticipated as stable, unitary structures or agents. Every macro phenomenon is a local achievement, but does not necessarily stay local. Whatever seems huge – and, therefore, powerful or structural – stays small during analysis, and states only become powerful through micro-level assemblages of mechanisms, procedures, texts, and trained bodies. States become unitary actor-like entities not by virtue of the scientist

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[63] Lemke, *'Neoliberalismus, Staat und Selbsttechnologien'*, 31–47.

studying them, but by the assemblages that produce them and by practices of invoking the state.

As the social turns out to be a relational material assemblage, as structures turn out to be ongoing material and discursive achievements, and as macro-phenomena turn out to be local enactments, some of (international) political sociology's most beloved assumptions about the stuff that societies and, consequently, politics are made of have to be revised. By conceptualizing states as actor-networks, (international) political sociology loses a parsimonious way to speak of states as institutions, unitary actors on a world stage, or as political entities *sui generi*. In exchange, however, a line of research in International Relations adopting a flexible framework for analyzing states would observe how states become and are maintained as institutions, what enables politicians to speak for them as actors in international relations, and how political entities of all forms are constructed, invoked, and performed.

The upshot for readers of this, admittedly modest, experiment in post-anthropological international relations is as follows. First, we claimed that our analysis identifies and explores some of the outer limits of what it might mean to legitimately de-center the human element in IR. How far can one push that limit? As it happens, we identified two models, the state and stateness, which could be construed to be un-inhabited by persons, because human nature was subsumed in the theorizing of a macro entity, in the former, and because human nature was reduced to disciplinary techniques as power is expressed through governmentalization, in the latter. We then, with some colliding force, fused the two models together, the actor model and the network model, into an actor-network model that was also nearly bereft of human inhabitants. Surely, there is a limit to how far humans can be de-centered from IR research, and, no doubt, close readers have noticed that we snuck-in humans here and there – even though we tried not to. The message we wish to underscore now, however, is the vast utility of post-anthropological IR and the fresh perspective it will require of scholars because, in order to arrive at a functioning analysis, we had to bring-in and sift-through literature far away from the heart of IR. In the end, this cross-fertilization will likely be a well-spring

for future research. Second, we claimed that our test in post-anthropology also has an important implication for the relationship that binds IR to ir, stating that we want a model of models. State multiplicity is one viable direction for future post-anthropology IR research, here is why: our scholarly theories of states and stateness spill from the mouths of diplomats and politicians every day, in some form or another; however, politicians do not talk about states the way theorists do. Scholars, if our historical tour through state theory is any indication, appear to be on a never-ending quest to essentialize, systematize, and abstract models of the state. But we cannot be mad at them. They are theorists. Theory is what they do. However, there is a limit to the utility of all this theory, which is, we know, a 'rich' comment coming from authors of a chapter devoted almost entirely to theory. That being said, when diplomats and ambassadors speak for the state or speak of states, they are not theorizing. Our call in this chapter is something of call to stop theorizing too; we asked scholars not to take-for-granted the actor status or network character of states and, instead, keep that question open for investigation each time in order to see which model holds – which model works for the data or the situation. We speculate that when state theory is used 'out in the wild' (i.e., in the practices of ir), it is less like the clever scale models we erect in IR and more like a set of tools, for example, to obviate war or justify a wiretap, all of which, again, we speculate, happens *in vivo* through trial-and-error hoping that the model or the view of states that is used gets the job done, or, put another way, is pragmatically useful. It is our belief that state multiplicity, as an orienting vision of states, can contain and make fruitful these differences, occasional similarities, and unexpected symbioses that bind IR and ir.

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