Article

Statist political science and American Marxism: A historical encounter

Rafael Khachaturian
Department of Political Science, Indiana University Bloomington, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA.
rafkhach@indiana.edu

Abstract This article reexamines the disciplinary origins of American political science. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the field was engaged in a project of ideological state-building, relying on the concept of the state to put forward a particular normative vision of the American polity. This professional language of governance was developed partially in response to the democratic pressures of the period and to the growing prominence of socialist ideas, which were excluded from the framework of systematic political knowledge. Drawing upon the example of Daniel De Leon, a political scientist turned Marxist theorist, this article contrasts the disciplinary and radical socialist views of the state developed at the time. It suggests that these coexisting perspectives articulated competing notions of political agency, rights, and citizenship. Bridging the history of American political science with that of Marxism in the United States highlights the contested character of disciplinary knowledge, and the relationship between the concept of the state and its legacy in American political development.
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Over the course of its history as an independent discipline, American political science has been closely tied to the state (Gunnell, 1991; Farr, 2003). In the second half of the nineteenth century, it was crucial for this emerging field that an American state actually existed as a prominent public object that could be studied, since its institutions served as a concrete referent for the discipline (Leonard, 1995). As John W. Burgess, one of the most prominent political scientists of the late nineteenth century wrote, 'The national popular state alone furnishes the objective reality upon which political science can rest in the construction of a truly scientific political system' (Burgess, 1890, p. 58). At the same time, if theorizing politics through the lens of the state gave political science the justification for its existence, the public mission of this scholarship was to legitimate the process of national

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state-building by promoting 'the establishment of a unitary national state accompanied by a virtuous national citizenry' (Dryzek, 2006, p. 487).

In contrast to its sister disciplines, political economy and sociology, there was fairly little ideological controversy within the various professional institutions of political science founded during the last two decades of the nineteenth century (Ross, 1977–1978, 1991, pp. 66–97). To better understand the reason for this ideological uniformity, and why early American political science developed in close connection to the American state-building project, we must take into account how its disciplinary identity was formed vis-à-vis the marginalization of concurrently existing political discourses. A discussion of the origins of political science in the United States must highlight how the questions, problems, and concepts that made up the discursive matrix of the discipline emerged in opposition to the radical social currents that appeared as a result of industrialization, territorial expansion, and immigration. The class, gender, and racial inequalities that were increasingly brought to the forefront as a result of these processes threatened previously existing conceptions of popular sovereignty and political inclusivity. In response, the underlying normative goal of political science scholarship was to strengthen the existing republican institutions against these critical challengers. Therefore, the professional discourse about the state as the utmost representation of national unity was intimately bound to the aspirations and anxieties experienced by educated observers of politics in the post-Civil War U.S.

In particular, the theoretical construction of the state in American political science took place concurrently with the growing prominence of socialist ideas. To illustrate this aspect of disciplinary history, this study juxtaposes the theorization of the state in the early scholarship alongside the radical socialist ideas that were then gaining traction among the American labor movement. Socialism, especially the form it took through the organizing efforts of German émigré radicals, was hardly the only framework through which critiques of the existing order were made, since ideological resistance involved the intersection of various class, race, and gender-based contestations (Bederman, 1995). However, it is notable that the early political scientists explicitly saw socialism as a threat to the principles of individual liberty, private property, and freedom of contract upon which the state and the republic were founded. Therefore, I suggest that the construction of a professional language of governance that was the domain of the new field of political science was in part premised on the treatment of socialism as an ideological limit. The focus on the state characteristic of the nineteenth-century political science scholarship and its critique of socialism were part of a single effort to demarcate the boundaries and nature of the American polity at a time of significant transformation. Placing these two intellectual trajectories in dialogue elucidates the degree to which they were cultivated in proximity to each other – an encounter that has largely been left unexamined by both disciplinary historians and scholars of Marxism in the U.S.

Since both professional political science and revolutionary socialism held distinct understandings of the state, it is a particularly useful conceptual lens through which these political discourses can be compared and contextualised. Treating the state as the key notion around which the science of politics ought to be formed, political science scholarship saw in it the expression of an underlying social unity emerging over the course of history. In light of this view, radical socialist ideas appeared as atavistic remnants of a preliberal past and as dangerous bearers of civil discontent in the present. At the same time, the discourse of 'historical materialism' largely transposed from Germany into the U.S. and adopted by certain segments of the labor movement maintained a different conception of the state, depicting it as a form of institutionalized class rule. Implicit in these contrasting perspectives were two competing understandings of the same American polity – one seeing the industrializing American state as the representation of a national popular sovereignty and a bulwark in defense of republican principles; the other seeing in it a form of political domination that served the interests of the capitalist class. Yet in both cases, the state acted as an ideological reference point through which competing understandings of what constituted legitimate claims about rights, citizenship, and the proper political order were articulated and contested.

In this article, I expand on this argument in three steps. First, the article discusses how, over the course of the nineteenth century, disciplinary scholarship created a form of institutionalized knowledge that held a particular and exclusionary vision of the state at its center. Following that, I situate this scholarship within the social conflicts of the period, including the concurrent appearance of modern socialist ideas in the U.S. Within this narrative, Daniel De Leon is an exemplary figure, for his trajectory from academic political science to Marxism bridged these two intellectual strands, and exemplified how socialist ideas were critically evaluated by professional political science. The article concludes by addressing how the critical reception of socialism affected the formation of political science as a state-building enterprise, and the implications of these insights for our understanding of both disciplinary history and the state concept.

The Statist Science of Politics

Although the language of the state was already present in American political discourse during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Farr, 1993), it was in the mid-nineteenth century that it began to be treated as a concept forming the basis for a science of politics. The expansion of the American university system after 1865 prompted scholars in newly consolidating fields like political science, political economy, and sociology to delineate the boundaries of their respective objects of study (Ross, 1991), and for political science, the state concept became a source of 'theoretical coherence and discursive identity' (Bartelson, 2001, p. 47).

Yet this theorization of the state as an academic practice held a conservative vision of the American polity that represented the 'political aspirations of a professional class alarmed by popular excitements in a democratic age' (Farr, 2003, p. 309). For this reason, the ideal representation of the state in this scholarly discourse was premised upon a number of hierarchical exclusions and the marginalization of elements seen as threatening to the social cohesion of the republic.

As disciplinary historians have noted, both the increasing prominence of the state concept and the professionalization of political science in the U.S. were influenced by German juridical–political thought and the educational model of the Prussian university (Fries, 1973; Gunnell, 1991). The origin of the transatlantic influence that German *Staatswissenschaft* had on American political science is frequently traced to the Prussian *émigré* Francis Lieber (Friedel, 1947; Brown, 1951; Mack and Lesesne, 2005). Lieber's *Manual of Political Ethics* represented perhaps 'the first systematic treatise on the state in American political science' (Farr, 1993, p. 72). That work contained a multifaceted description of the state as a jural society 'founded on the relations of right'; as the 'natural state of man'; as a 'society of moral beings'; and as existing 'for the better obtaining of the true ends of each individual, and of society collectively' (Lieber, 1911, pp. 152–162). Lieber assigned to the state the role of a juridical mediator between the rights of the individual and the duties they owed to the collective (Adcock, 2014, p. 78). In doing so, Lieber sought to explicate the purposes and ends of the state, as well as how the principles of constitutional government could help the state balance the competing claims found in a pluralistic republic – all to enable, as he later stated, a society of individuals 'united by common bonds, interests, organizations, and a common continuity' (Lieber, 1858, pp. 54–55).

In the following decades, the understanding of political science as the 'science of the state,' initially articulated by Lieber and his European contemporaries like Johann Kaspar Bluntschli, underwent a period of steady expansion in the U.S. One reason for this professionalization of political science was that thousands of American students studied in German universities over the course of the nineteenth century, with approximately 1,300 in Berlin during the 1880s alone (Oren, 2003, p. 190). This list of prominent scholars at the time includes Theodore Dwight Woolsey, John William Burgess, Herbert Baxter Adams, Munroe Smith, Frank J. Goodnow, and William Dunning. Through their introduction of the historical and juridical methodology of *Staatswissenschaft* into the American context, the language of the state and of disciplinary political science grew closely intertwined. Although political science remained tied to related fields like moral philosophy, jurisprudence, and history, the state concept also provided scholars with a highly general and unitary representation of political authority. As Woolsey wrote, the comprehensiveness of the state made it 'the only scientific term proper for a treatise on politics' (Woolsey, 1889, p. 142). Most commonly, the state was understood as a

form of organized political life tied to the historical development of the nation and the expression of its particular normative ideals and principles.

Academic institutionalization and the training of future public servants and professional exponents of specialized political knowledge linked this scholarly exegesis about the state to the envisioned growth of the national state (e.g., Skowronek, 1982, pp. 42–45; Leonard, 1995). Most notable were the political science departments established under the direction of Adams at Johns Hopkins University in 1876 and under Burgess at Columbia University in 1880 (Herbst, 1965). Columbia's School of Political Science was especially representative in this regard, with Burgess' curriculum including such themes as 'the origin and development of the State through its several phases of *political organization* down to the modern constitutional form,' 'the history of the philosophic theories of the state,' and 'the existing actual and legal relations of the State' (Gunnell, 1991, pp. 146–147). In addition to academic departments, the institutionalization of political science occurred through the creation of scholarly journals such as *Political Science Quarterly* (the first journal of political science in the U.S., founded by Burgess in 1886); and through the creation of professional organizations like the American Social Science Association in 1865, the American Academy of Political and Social Science in 1889, and the American Political Science Association in 1903.

In the introduction to the first issue of *PSQ*, Munroe Smith wrote that 'political science signifies, literally, the science of the state' and that the state 'is rapidly becoming, if it is not already, the central factor of social evolution' (Smith, 1886, pp. 1, 8). Smith's language was indicative of the historicist and evolutionary manner in which the state was generally treated at this time. The state was seen as a constant feature of all civilized societies, yet also as undergoing a process of a natural growth from the infancy of tribal association and the city-state to the maturity of the modern nation (Bartelson, 2001, pp. 49–52). Influenced by Hegel, Burgess suggested that the end of humanity's self-alienation could happen only if the state reconciled the spheres of the family and of civil society (Lowenberg, 1955; McClay, 1993). Calling the state 'the product of the progressive revelation of the human reason through history,' Burgess concluded that its universal human purpose was 'the perfection of humanity; the civilization of the world; the perfect development of the human reason, and its attainment to universal command over individualism; the apotheosis of man' (Burgess, 1890, pp. 67, 85). As an entity 'in possession of complete sovereignty over both the individual and the government,' the state was the representation of popular sovereignty and the guarantor of individual liberty, providing the American people with 'objective aids and supports upon which to steady our reflection and by which to guide our science' (Burgess, 1890, p. 58).

Formulations such as Burgess's also highlight the tenuous and partial manner in which these scholars envisioned popular sovereignty and democratic belonging. Hierarchical ideologies and institutions prominently shaped American political

development during that time, affecting state policies regarding nationalization, immigration, voting rights, judicial procedures, and economic rights (Smith, 1999; King, 2005). By theorizing a particular conception of the state, disciplinary scholarship was actively involved in a project of legitimating existing institutions and the various exclusionary political practices of the post-Civil War era.

Within the sociopolitical context of that period, the principles developed by figures like Burgess and Woodrow Wilson (who obtained his Ph.D. under Adams at Johns Hopkins) were linked to racialized conceptions of politics, such as the supposed origin of Anglo-American political institutions in 'Teutonic' Northern Europe (Oren, 2003, pp. 23–46). Frequently, the state was professed to be a historical entity distinct from and above government, possessing a cultural–historical *telos* toward the cultivation of a common good, and mediating between the competitive elements found in civil society. As Woolsey put it in generational terms, it was to act for the sake of 'every man, woman, and child, now living, and all that shall come after them' (Woolsey, 1889, p. 205). However, this discourse also effectively insulated the state and its policies from public contestation and oversight, as active political citizenship was restricted to a small group of elected representatives and the state was seen as subject only to its own internal logic of historical development. Proposed policies such as expanded suffrage, reparations for slavery and indigenous dislocation, and the opening of the country to immigration, were excluded on the basis of their absence from the nation's Teutonic political heritage and its principles of individualism, representative democracy, and limited constitutional government (Farr, 2007, pp. 79–80). In this sense, the discourse of the state and its historical development was invoked to act as a potential bulwark against popular pressures from below.

To clarify this claim, we may turn to the role that the nascent labor movement played in this narrative as a threat to the republican principles on which the American state was founded. As early as 1841, in his *Essays on Property and Labour*, Lieber observed that the uneven distribution of property and wealth in the country led to emerging calls for a 'community of property' among socialists (Lieber, 1841, p. 165). Lieber attributed the existing inequalities to natural differences between individuals, framing them within a narrative of historical progress in which property rights and government were intertwined: 'Only when men have acquired distinct and private property in the soil, they unite into closer and more peaceful societies, soften in manners, and then only grow up the more distinct governments, which form one of the indispensable means of civilization' (Lieber, 1841, pp. 191–192). While property rights formed the basis of civilization, communism represented a form of undifferentiated barbarism. In his 1858 inaugural address as the first chair of History and Political Science at Columbia, Lieber contrasted freedom to all forms of absolutism, in which there is 'a strong element of communism' (Lieber, 1858, p. 24). A utopian doctrine that threatened property rights, communism was a modern day despotism, and 'despotism, of

whatever name, is the most equalitarian government. The communist forgets that communism in property, as far as it can exist in reality, is a characteristic feature of low barbarism' (Lieber, 1858, p. 58).

Although Lieber's writings during the 1840s and 1850s overlapped with the slow rise of socialist ideas within the American labor movement, the communist currents he was referring to at the time were not the same ones that later concerned figures like Woolsey and Burgess. Thus, the *Essays* only mentioned Fourier by name (in the context of the communal property of women), and the 1858 address treated communism as part of a utopian lineage from Plato to Rousseau and Proudhon. However, in 1871, Lieber retrospectively summarized the *Essays* as now applicable to the contemporary 'Democratic Absolutism' of Karl Marx and 'the Internationals' (Lieber, 1882, p. 416), reflecting the growing prominence of Marxist ideas in the American context (Farr and Ball, 2015). While little was initially available of Marx's works in English, apart from Helen Macfarlane's 1850 translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, by 1880, Marx was already notorious enough in the U.S. for his ideas to merit extended discussion in Woolsey's tract *Communism and Socialism*, as well as to earn mention in his 1877 textbook *Political Science* as an influence on the 'extreme wing' of the First International (Woolsey, 1889, p. 319).

Given these mentions of Marx, the next section discusses the emergence of Marxian 'scientific socialism' and its role as an oppositional political discourse during this period. While disciplinary political science used the state concept to articulate a set of conservative republican ideas, it has recently been argued that the American labor movement of the time presented an alternative vision of 'labor republicanism' (Gourevitch, 2014). Along similar lines, I suggest that the increasing presence of scientific socialism also introduced a different understanding of the state from the one serving to ground professional political science. This conception of the state as institutionalized class rule represented a different ideological position from which its adherents approached immediate questions of political power, democracy, rights, and citizenship. This argument will be further clarified through a discussion of Daniel De Leon, a trained political scientist and onetime colleague of Burgess at Columbia, who, as the main force behind the Socialist Labor Party from 1890 to 1914, became one of the most prominent American exponents of Marxism.

The Scientific Socialism of Daniel De Leon

The ties between German socialism and the American labor movement were initially formed in the 1850s, as associates of Marx like Joseph Weydemeyer and Friedrich Sorge immigrated to the U.S in the wake of the 1848 revolutions. During the period of 1852–1853, Weydemeyer established the short-lived American

Workers' League in New York City, while his journal *Die Revolution* was the first to publish Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (in the original German). Meanwhile Sorge, also based in New York at the time, organized the Communist Club in 1857, which by 1870 had morphed into a member section of the International Workingmen's Association (the First International).

The existence of the IWMA in America proved tumultuous, as German-American radicals under Sorge's leadership encountered rival progressive and radical discourses in the American labor movement and clashed with a diverse membership including anarchists, feminists, radical republicans, Lassalleans, and Christian socialists (Lause, 1992). The IWMA was unable to overcome the largely parochial attitude of its membership, for example never having published an English-language press organ (Musto, 2014, p. 39). The notorious schism between Sorge's Section 1 and Victoria Woodhull's and Tennessee Claflin's Section 12 concluded in the exodus of a large portion of the American radicals from the International in 1871–72, highlighting the Marxists' problematic neglect of issues such as women's suffrage and gender equality in the labor force (Messer-Kruse, 1998). Thus, while the IWMA's General Council moved its headquarters to New York in 1872 (coinciding with the first publication of the *Manifesto* in the U.S. in *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*), the split between the Marxists and the 'Yankee' radicals relegated the former to a marginalized status.

Catalyzed by the economic depression of the 1870s, the subsequent two decades brought forth calls for agrarian reform, the eight-hour workday, collective bargaining for wages – and, less nobly, anti-immigrant (especially Chinese) and anti-black sentiments (Fine and Tichenor, 2009). The period from the mid-1870s until the turn of the century saw waves of protests, with one account tallying 37,000 labor strikes in the years between 1881 and 1905 (Bederman, 1995, p. 14). Observing these developments at a distance, Marx and Engels noted in 1882 how 'the small and middle land ownership of the farmers, the basis of the whole political constitution, is succumbing to the competition of giant farms; at the same time, a mass industrial proletariat and a fabulous concentration of capital funds are developing for the first time in the industrial regions' (Marx and Engels, 1978). Five years later, taking note of the growth of the Knights of Labor and the Haymarket affair, Engels optimistically wrote that in America, 'where no mediaeval ruins bar the way, where history begins with the elements of modern bourgeois society as evolved in the seventeenth century,' it would take the working class a mere ten months to pass through the stages of developing a class consciousness and the formation of a political party (Engels, 2009, p. 305).

Historians have often concluded that during the nineteenth century, 'tradition, ethnicity, and the strength of American capital among many other factors precluded the hegemony of Marxists in radical circles' (Buhle, 1991, p. 36). However, while not hegemonic, Marxian socialism did become a more prominent discourse during this period, especially in immigrant heavy cities like New York and Chicago.

Between 1878 and 1890, while the Social Democratic Party of Germany was severely constrained by Bismarck's antisocialist legislature, exiled radicals from abroad joined the German-American veterans of the IWMA in the ranks of the newly founded Socialist Labor Party. The SLP sought to organize not solely in the workplace but also on the political level, for example by encouraging its members to apply for citizenship in order to acquire voting rights (Keil, 2001). Radical publishing houses like the SLP's own New York Labor News Company and Charles H. Kerr (after 1900) brought Marx's and Engels's texts to a wider audience. The year 1887 saw the appearance of Florence Kelley's translation of Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, and of Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling's translation of *Capital*, Vol. I. Moore's translation of the *Manifesto,* authorized by Engels, appeared in the next year.

Despite this growing circulation of socialist ideas, during the 1880s the SLP was still overshadowed by organizations like the Knights of Labor and the agrarian radicalism of Henry George. As George himself had put it, due to the strongly rooted individualism of American culture, 'the socialism of the German school can never make the headway here that it has on the continent of Europe' (Keil, 2001, p. 42). Recognizing this deficiency, Engels wrote in the Preface of the newly republished *Condition of the Working Class in England* that the SLP would have to 'doff every remnant of their foreign garb [and] become out and out American' (Engels, 2009, p. 309). Some years later, he also noted that the peculiar American conditions of ethnic and racial diversity, the dual party machine, and a protectionist tariff system all posed challenges to a socialist movement (Engels, 1990, pp. 75–76). To this should also be added the nation's westward territorial expansion, which acted as a safety valve to class conflict in the country's urban centers and accounted for the popularity of doctrines calling for land reform.

This ideological and political context served as the background for Daniel De Leon's conversion to Marxian socialism. Spanning the formative years of both American political science and of Marxism in the United States, De Leon's example shows the proximity of these two discourses during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. De Leon's intellectual home was at Columbia University, first as a student at the Law School from 1876 to 1878, and then as a lecturer on international law at the School of Political Science between 1883 and 1889 (Seretan, 1979, pp. 12–15). At the School of Political Science De Leon participated in Burgess' seminars on constitutional history, and Burgess subsequently recalled him as someone who 'knew more international law and diplomatic history than any man of his age I had ever met' (Bender, 1997, p. 54). Having published an article in the first issue of *Political Science Quarterly* on the Berlin Conference, De Leon appeared to be on the way to a promising academic career (De Leon, 1886). However, he soon grew dissatisfied with the conservative leanings of Columbia's faculty, including their disdain for George's unsuccessful mayoral campaign for New York City in 1886, with the university's President Frederick Barnard notably

describing Georgism as a 'movement which is regarded by this body as menacing the destruction of the existing order of civilized society' (Bender, 1997, p. 55). George's campaign, along with De Leon's reading of Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* and *Anti-Dühring* ca. 1887, can be pointed to as the start of his gradual radicalization. This was not well received at Columbia, where he was told that, in one author's words, 'a supporter of the United Labor party and the Haymarket defendants in 1886, who joined the Knights of Labor in 1888 and [Edward] Bellamy's Nationalists in 1889, should not count on making an academic career' (Herreshoff, 1967, p. 113).

Leaving academia by 1890, De Leon quickly rose to a leadership position in the SLP. Stepping into this environment, De Leon's goal was to cultivate a broader base of support among an American audience while at the same time pushing the party in an antireformist direction. While De Leon has been rightly criticized for his doctrinaire approach (Buhle, 1991, pp. 52–56),[1] his political and intellectual efforts did provide an important bridge between the socialist movements in the U.S. and on the European continent. A polyglot educated in Germany and the Netherlands, De Leon translated a number of Marx and Engels' texts into English, including *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1892), the *Eighteenth Brumaire* (1898) and the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1900), as well as works by Karl Kautsky (Coleman 1990, p. 24). With De Leon as its chief editor, during the early 1890s, the SLP's paper *The People* also featured the writings of contemporary European socialists like August Bebel, Paul Lafargue, Jean Jaurès, Jules Guesde, and Henry Hyndman, introducing these writers to an American audience (Stevenson, 1980).

Most important for the present discussion is that as the voice of the SLP, De Leon was instrumental in bringing into the American context an alternative conception of the state derived from the basic premises of 'scientific socialism' as developed by Engels.[2] From the late 1870s until his death in 1895, Engels was the driving force in establishing Marxism as 'an object of exegesis' (Carver, 1981, p. 63) or a knowledge system derived from the standpoint of the materialist interpretation of history. By the late 1880s, his accounts were a key intellectual reference point for Marxists both in Germany and the U.S. (Farr, 1999, pp. 264–266). In particular, De Leon was influenced by Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, and thus also by Lewis Henry Morgan's 1877 book *Ancient Society.*

However, De Leon displaced Engels's treatment of the state as an organ of class coercion from the level of scholarly exegesis and into the more immediate realm of political practice. This was done precisely at the time when questions such as the relationship between trade unionism and political organization were becoming of paramount importance to the SLP and the American labor movement as a whole. Thus, in his address 'Reform or Revolution?' De Leon (1896) could not resist polemicizing against his former academic colleagues, asking the audience: 'How many of you have not seen upon the shelves of our libraries books that treat upon

the "History of the State"; upon the "Limitations of the State"; upon "What the State Should do and What It Should Not Do"; upon the "Legitimate Functions of the State," and so on into infinity?' For De Leon, such products of the 'vulgar and superficial character of capitalist thought' failed to scientifically define the state or government in comparison to the advances made by Marx, Engels, and Morgan. Due to the general importance of evolutionary theory for the Second International (Carver, 1991; Pittenger, 1993; Lloyd, 1997), De Leon's account of the state adopted the evolutionistic model of Engels and, in a different sense, of Burgess.[3]

Whereas Burgess invoked the state as the animating spirit of republican institutions and (limited) popular sovereignty, De Leon followed Engels in suggesting that it was an entity whose historical origins lay in the development of private property and class society. The historical emergence of class society from primitive communism required the establishment of the state as an entity appearing to stand over society. The 'political state' was therefore 'that social structure which marks the epoch since which society was ruptured into classes, and class- rule began' and where 'government is an organ separate and apart from production, with no vital function other than the maintenance of the supremacy of the ruling class' (De Leon, 1913a, pp. 43, 38). In short, in the modern era 'the governmental administration of capitalism is the State' (De Leon, 1905b). Yet in accordance with the dynamics of social evolution, if 'the political State marks the culmination of the march of the human race from primitive communism to capitalism…the form of government of capitalism must and will be supplanted by another, which shall be the true shadow and reflex of the changed material conditions that mark this third [socialist] revolution' (De Leon, 1905a).

De Leon envisioned the organization of the industrial forces and the socialist revolution that followed as bringing about the overthrow of the state. In some texts, he directly invoked Engels in suggesting that the state would wither away with a revolution in the relations of production, writing that while 'Capitalist society requires the political State…in Socialist society the political State is a thing of the past, either withered out of existence by disuse or amputated, according as circumstances may dictate' (De Leon, 1905b). Yet in other places, De Leon suggested that the 'political state' would be substituted with an 'industrial state' or 'Industrial Social Order' in which the means of production would be collectively owned and operated by and for the people (De Leon, 1913a, p. 38). In this second conception, the new industrial state would remain as a coordinating and administrative – but no longer strictly political – entity: 'The central directing authority will lose all its repressive functions and is bound to reassume the functions it had in the old communities of our ancestors, become again a necessary aid, and assist in production' (De Leon, 1897). Placed under the direct control of the industrial unions and no longer possessing a class character, the new state would act on behalf of the entire cooperative commonwealth.

In both cases, De Leon opposed gradualist efforts at social reform, criticizing those who supported the nationalization and state ownership of industries (De Leon, 1893, 1897), since this change would simply ‘put into the hands of the political State, the State which consists of capitalists, the management of industry’ (De Leon, 1913b, p. 11). This placed De Leon at odds with contemporary Progressives like Richard T. Ely, for whom the state was not an agent of class domination but the means by which the social order could regulate the pernicious effects of *laissez faire* capitalism (Rodgers, 1998, pp. 100–101). Yet if De Leon rejected state socialism, he nevertheless approached the state and its institutions as a terrain on which the jointly economic and political struggle of the working class could occur. As he wrote, echoing Engels (1978) from ten years earlier on the possibility of an electoral road to power by the SPD, circumstances required the social revolution to partly plot a course through the ‘bourgeois shell’ of existing political institutions, which meant creating a political organization ‘that shall contest the possession of the political robber burg by the capitalist class’ (De Leon, 1905b). Per Engels, the form of the democratic republic that the state took in America and its guarantee of universal manhood suffrage were conducive to the maturation of the working class (Engels, 1986, p. 211). Through its mobilization within the SLP, De Leon envisioned the working class using electoral means to bring the government under their control to establish a socialist cooperative republic (De Leon, 1898).

Although De Leon’s rivalries with other socialist organizations ultimately kept the SLP from the forefront of the labor movement after the turn of the century (Foner, 1955, pp. 279–281), throughout his writings he framed the state as a target of political action by grounding it within a broader critique of industrial capitalism. In this sense, De Leon’s place in the history of American Marxism and the coinciding of his ideas with the disciplinary formation of American political science provide an important contemporary contrast to the professional statist discourse of the period. Though educated in the tradition of *Staatswissenschaft*, De Leon’s adoption of scientific socialism led him to articulate a representation of the state notably different from the one appearing in the professional scholarship on politics. While the latter sought to fortify existing institutions by representing the state as a unifying political authority, for De Leon, the state was a parasitic obstacle standing in the way of a more authentic form of social coexistence, and needed to be overcome by political struggle. The scientific socialist view thus treated the state as a false universality that depended on an underlying economic dimension and which masked the domination by a ruling class.

From this comparison, we can see that the state appeared as a multifaceted and contested concept, figuring into the framework of rival discourses concerning legitimacy and political agency. As De Leon wrote, ‘we Socialists know that if government is to be at all justified it is upon the ground of the protection it affords to the people; and we also know that, under the capitalist system, the “people” who

count are not the workers…the advantage to be derived from the theory of protection does not extend to the workers, to the majority of the people' (De Leon, 1904). To be sure, De Leon's fixation on the class struggle still renders such formulations problematic, for one can rightly ask who counted among 'the people' or 'the workers' here. Since De Leon's political strategy was premised on the electoral mobilization of the working class, it hardly touched upon the contemporary issues of women's suffrage and the suppression of African-American suffrage in the Jim Crow south. Thus, like the political scientists' view of popular sovereignty, the Marxist view of the class struggle was also premised upon forms of identity-based exclusion that were woven into the fabric of the labor movement and American society at the time. Even so, such blind spots provide additional evidence that the contesting interpretations of the state presented here were enmeshed in a broader set of social tensions characteristic of the late nineteenth-century U.S., and that the state was the conceptual medium through which normative visions of the political order were articulated.

The Critique of Socialism

As the prospect of socialism in America became a more prominent threat during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, recently established departments of political science fostered a professional language of politics and the state through which a normative order combating these ideas was enacted. Scholarly treatments of the political economy of Marxism and socialism appeared in journals like *PSQ* from the 1880s onward (e.g., Osgood, 1886; Gunton, 1889; Simkhovitch, 1908). One of the earliest treatments of socialism and the state was in Woolsey's *Communism and Socialism*. Woolsey maintained that while the role of the constitutional state was to act as a neutral arbiter between competing class interests, the socialist state was destined to take on an unlimited form, for 'unlimited governments are more like one another, whether they be called monarchies or oligarchies or democracies, than they are each like to a limited government of their own name' (Woolsey, 1880, p. 232). Like Lieber before him, Woolsey suggested that the abolition of private property would transform the state from a 'great community' into an organization that 'should usurp the most important functions of society' and constantly enforce its judgments through coercion (Woolsey, 1880, pp. 7, 270). The state would not disappear with the socialist order, but instead 'have all the powers now distributed through society in their highest potence' (Woolsey, 1880, p. 13).

In contrast to this unlimited state, Woolsey envisioned the main purpose of the constitutionally limited state to be the representation of the general interest and the administration of justice, including the enforcement of fair contracts between parties. Woolsey recognized that contractual agreements between capital and labor

frequently benefited the former, which 'needs little more aid than that furnished by the free use of courts and the freedom to change its form and place at will without interference on the part of the state,' while 'the interests of the laboring class need the state's protection, in order that in a strife with capital it may not be oppressed'. However, he cautioned that 'no class of persons has any right to the care or aid of the state more than another; the laborer cannot claim it at the expense of the other portions of society' (Woolsey, 1889, pp. 220–221). Given the crucial role of the court system in constraining the labor movement during the nineteenth century (Orren, 1991; Hattam, 1993), Woolsey's remarks provide one example of how the representation of a neutral state and public law at the time actually validated the inequalities of civil society.

In addition, Woolsey recognized that the country's development into an industrial power had transformed the pre-Civil War social order, destroying the economic competitiveness of craftsmen while at the same time 'the growth of a feeling of liberty and of equal political rights aggravates the evil working of this necessary state of things' (Woolsey, 1889, p. 305). Under such social conditions, the people were especially liable to succumb to demagoguery. For this reason, so-called 'political rights' such as suffrage and the holding of office were qualitatively different than the personal rights of property and contract (Woolsey, 1889, pp. 27–28), and thus not guaranteed equally to all members of society. For this reason, Woolsey maintained that there was no natural right to suffrage, limiting it to men aged over twenty-one and excluding women, criminals, and 'those classes without intelligence or property or character' (Woolsey, 1889, p. 301). Once again, the state was presented as insulated from the demands of civil society and the rising sentiments of social and political equality that had emerged with the onset of industrialization.

Writing during high point of the Gilded Age, Burgess was also aware of the danger that industrialization posed for the country in terms of class politics. The demand for political equality verged dangerously close to establishing the tyranny of society, by opening the doors to the political participation of the working class, women, and racial minorities. Claiming to have first heard the 'vicious nonsense' of socialism at German universities, Burgess recognized that industrialization created an inherent class antagonism (Brown, 1951, pp. 157–160). Although he was a proponent of a strong national union, Burgess held reservations about 'the expansion of governmental powers at the will of the government itself', stemming from what he saw in Germany as the rising tide of 'the doctrines of socialism, which advocated the capture of the government by the masses, through an indiscriminate suffrage, and its use for the distribution of the wealth of the classes, or for conducting or controlling business enterprises' (Burgess, 1895, p. 411). Likely thinking of the SPD's electoral gains over the five years since the anti-socialist laws were lifted, Burgess worried that should the working class majority capture the power of government, it would only be a matter of time before it

attempted to expropriate the propertied minority. The prospect of electoral socialism in America risked destabilizing the state and the guarantees of individual liberty that it could provide, and proponents of revolution were 'enemies in principle of the American republic and of the political civilization of the world' (Burgess, 1895, p. 425).

The conception of the American state held by these scholars combined national unity, skepticism of democracy, and a belief in the innate logic of the historical development of Western civilization. By drawing attention to the problems of universal suffrage, the potential for despotic government, and the redistribution of property, they sought to protect the political order from the ideologies that were appearing during America's transition from an agrarian republic to an industrial empire. Most importantly, in defining the American state *vis-à-vis* the rival conception of political order held by socialist challengers, they established the purpose of political science as a training ground for expert civil servants and public leaders who would be unlikely to critique American political institutions and their legitimacy (Ross, 1991, p. 229).

The latter held true even after the turn of the century and the growth of the Progressive Movement, once the juridical–historical approach to the state developed by Burgess and his contemporaries began to give way to a greater focus on the study of groups and the dynamics of mass politics and public opinion (e.g., Bentley, 1908). While in his 1904 inaugural speech as the first president of APSA Frank Goodnow (1904, p. 37) could still introduce the purpose of political science as the 'realization of the State will', by the conclusion of World War I the state was increasingly seen as a 'Teutonic' and metaphysical concept imported from Germany rather than a notion that accurately described the unique social and political conditions of the U.S. (Oren, 2003).[4] Gradually replacing the old views was a newer generation of political science scholarship less concerned with the state than with the more concrete processes mediating between the people and their government, such as elections and legislative behavior (Gunnell, 1995; Ciepley, 2000; Stears, 2002).

Yet even as the older theories of the state were falling out of favor, Progressive scholars continued to appeal to it for promoting social cooperation between classes and remedying the inequalities of the Gilded Age (Balogh, 2009, pp. 352–378). In that regard, Charles Merriam (1920, p. 357) could plausibly claim that the socialist theory of the state 'deeply influenced the general course of political thought in America', despite never being widely adopted. However, Marxism remained just one part of a broad tapestry of progressive, social democratic, and radical standpoints (Kloppenberg, 1986; Rodgers, 1998). The relative marginalization of radical socialist perspectives such as De Leon's from the academic discourse of political science ensured that the Progressive movement adopted a more benign understanding of the state, as a harmonizer of diverging social interests rather than an agent of class domination. Progressives like Richard Ely channeled the anti-capitalist tendencies in their work 'into the safe and sane complexities of emerging

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academic discourse and professional social science' (Seidelman, 2015, p. 24). When they were made, critiques of the social order coming from the academic establishment were more inclined to see the state as a solution for the inequalities of industrial capitalism, rather than as one of its symptoms.

The State and the Discipline

Roughly one hundred years after the developments depicted here, Theodore Lowi's (1993) presidential address to APSA observed that 'American political science is itself a political phenomenon and, as such, is a product of the American state'. While political theorists and historians of the social sciences have previously examined this connection between the disciplinary history of political science and the project of building a national American state, this article has argued that the growing prominence of radical socialist ideas, among other overlapping political and social tensions, also had a formative effect on this process. By bringing the history of radical socialism in the U.S. into dialogue with the intellectual origins of political science, it is possible to draw some conclusions about how the study of politics came to be institutionalized as a field of knowledge and about the ideological role that it played for American state-formation.

First, the proximity and coexistence of two distinct understandings of the state in relation to the social order, and the exclusion of one of these from the framework of systematic political knowledge, illustrates how one of the modern social sciences was enmeshed within the social tensions of its time. Studies addressing state formation, democratization, and the diversity of intellectual traditions in the U.S. (e.g., Smith, 1999; Jacobs and King, 2009; King *et al.*, 2009) have highlighted the unevenness and complexity of American political development, refuting the narrative of American exceptionalism and the 'stifling hegemony of liberalism in American politics' (Orren and Skowronek, 2004, p. 72). In line with these arguments, this article shows that as older notions of rights, citizenship, and liberty came under question in the second half of the nineteenth century, the political science discipline did not remain immune to these social conflicts; instead, it developed a particular normative conception of republican government and the state. In the process, political science was constructed as a professionally legitimate, state-supporting field, having demarcated itself from more critical political discourses. The result of this exclusion of competing viewpoints at a formative time in the discipline's history helped bind it closer to the state-building enterprise from the Progressive Era into the twentieth century.

Furthermore, examining this moment in disciplinary history through the competing interpretations given to the state also underscores this concept's ongoing importance. One of the defining features of the modern era has been the way the state has acted as an ideological mediator between concept and reality,

giving a semblance of unity, coherence, and authority to political institutions (Bartelson, 2001). The processes of state formation and consolidation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would have been impossible without the accompanying discourses about the state as a new type of political entity (Jessop, 1990, p. 347). In terms of the case studied here, it is important to note how different discourses about the state were used to publicly articulate competing responses to the social conflicts spurred by industrialization, as well as competing normative visions of the polity. This comparison highlights the essentially contested nature of the state as a discursive construct, and the manner in which theorizing the state is itself frequently a political act laden with practical consequences for the development of political institutions. As disciplinary historians, scholars of American political development, and political theorists all continue to study the relationship between political institutions and the discourses and ideologies by which they are represented, past examples can help clarify how the formation of key political concepts and the academic practices through which they are cultivated are themselves affected by a multitude of internal tensions and contestations.

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About the Author

Rafael Khachaturian is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science at Indiana University, Bloomington. His current research focuses on the history of American political science, examining the revival of interest in the concept of the state that took place within the discipline alongside its reception of Marxist state theory from the 1960s onward. His broader research interests include modern and contemporary political thought, critical theory, and democratic theory. His works have also been published in journals such as *Polity*, *Historical Materialism*, *Logos* and *Science & Society*.

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Notes

1 In 1894 Engels complained to Sorge that the German-American Socialists (i.e., the SLP) had reduced the Marxist theory of development to a 'mere orthodoxy…to be forced down the throats of the workers at once' (Engels, 1894).
2 Marx's discussions of the state, spanning such diverse texts as the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *The Civil War in France*, and the *Critique of the Gotha Programe* prevent the formation of a coherent unity to be called '*the* Marxist theory of the state' (Barrow, 2000). Engels' systematization of this aspect of Marx's thought took on additional political and theoretical importance for Marxist movements prior to World War I. Among Engels's important works during that period touching upon the state were *Anti-Dühring* (1878; translated into English in 1907), *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880; translated 1892), *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884; translated 1902), and *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886; translated 1903).
3 One of the first and most popular works to adapt German socialism into the American context was Laurence Gronlund's *The Cooperative Commonwealth,* which had a decidedly evolutionary tone, praising the socialist state as 'literally *an organism*, personal and territorial' (Gronlund, 1884, p. 81).
4 John Dewey continued to refer to 'the pluralistic state' and 'the Democratic State' well into the 1920s. However, even Dewey, who familiarized himself with the basics of Marxism in the 1890s (Farr, 1999), voiced criticism of how the German intellectual tradition exalted the state as an ethical entity (Dewey, 1915; see also Emerson, 2015).

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