

## ISSUES IN POLITICAL THEORY

Political Theory has undergone a remarkable development in recent years. From a state in which it was once declared dead, it has come to occupy a central place in the study of Politics. Both political ideas and the wide-ranging arguments to which they give rise are now treated in a rigorous, analytical fashion, and political theorists have contributed to disciplines as diverse as economics, sociology and law. These developments have made the subject more challenging and exciting, but they have also added to the difficulties of students and others coming to the subject for the first time. Much of the burgeoning literature in specialist books and journals is readily intelligible only to those who are already well-versed in the subject.

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# ISSUES IN POLITICAL THEORY

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# **The Legitimation of Power**

**David Beetham**

**M**  
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# Preface and Acknowledgements

Unlike other volumes in the series, this book is more a work of social science than of normative philosophy. Its ambition is to rescue the concept of legitimacy from the confusion into which it has sunk, so that its place in the analysis of power relations can be securely located. Fulfilling such an ambition is necessarily both a theoretical and a philosophical task. The first part of the book identifies the different components of legitimacy, and explores the processes of legitimation across the dimensions of gender, class and political power. The second part offers an account of legitimacy in relation to the contemporary state. The argument of the book is cumulative, so that each part is necessary to the other. I hope readers will forgive such a presumption on their continuing interest.

I have incurred many debts in writing the book, and learnt a lot from the comments of others. Draft chapters have been discussed by Diana Coole, Malcolm Harrison, Veronica Munoz, Ben Rogers and John Schwarzmantel. The bulk of the manuscript has been read by Zygmunt Bauman, Margaret Beetham, Diemut Bubeck, David Held, Steven Lukes, Peter Jones and Albert Weale, the last two in their capacity as editors of the series. I am grateful to them all for the trouble they have taken. Initial work on the project was made possible by a grant from the Economic and Social Research Council, and I acknowledge their support for research that is more interpretative than utilitarian in purpose. I must plead (who can't?) the pressure of administrative and teaching responsibilities for not having completed it sooner. Among the benefits of procrastination must be counted the fact that the manuscript was not ready when the European revolutions of 1989 took place, nor yet when the Iraqi

army invaded Kuwait. Although details of my analysis will be further overtaken by events, the main thrust of the argument will, I hope, prove sound. Finally, as one who remains wilfully devoted to the pen in preference to the keyboard, I salute once more the skills of Jeanne Bellovics.

*David Beetham*