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Another point about Mazzucato's entrepreneurial state [1]

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As we know, Marriana Mazzucato's idea, that the State is at the heart of all entrepreneurial activity, is storming the weaker minds over on the left side of the political aisle. I've pointed out before that invention can indeed be done by the State: but that's not what entrepreneurialism is, not at all. And the innovation that it is is something that is done appallingly by the State.

However, here's another problem with the idea. This comes from the obituary of Frederick Sanger [3]:

> This idea was controversial at the time as, although the 20 or so amino acids that can go to make up proteins were known, most scientists believed the arrangement of different amino acids in a protein to be random. One professor had even produced a complex mathematical formula that would express this random function. Thus, when Chibnall tried to get Sanger a grant from the Medical Research Council to work on protein structure, the grant was refused because ?everyone knew? that the pattern of amino acids in a protein was random.

Yes, this was basic science but the same point still stands. To explore the possible space of ideas, whether scientific or entrepreneurial, requires a multiplicity of funding sources. It cannot be just the one organisation because if there is only one then only those ideas the organisation is interested in, or believes feasible, will get funded.

That is, if we leave science or innovation to the State then we'll only get the sort of science or innovation that those who run the State either desire or consider feasible.

Ms. Mazzucato's poster child for her idea is Apple's iPhone. And we do all recall how the bureaucracies of both the US and the UK were doling out grants to people to develop such don't we? For it was indeed obvious to them that this is what 300 million people wanted to buy. Well, wasn't it?

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