
What is Politics? What is the State?

I. INTRODUCTION

1. BASE/SUPERSTRUCTURE

2. FUNCTIONAL EXPLANATIONS
   2.1 The structure of functional explanations: a consequence of something explains its existence
   2.2 functional vs intentional explanation
   2.3 functional explanation & functional description

3. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE SUPERSTRUCTURAL VIEW OF THE STATE?

4. MODIFYING THE FUNCTIONAL IMAGE OF THE STATE
   (1) State as arena of struggle \( \rightarrow \) contested functionality.
   (2) State as part of a complex semi-coherent system \( \rightarrow \) contradictory functionality.
   (3) The state as an historically specific structure: contingent contradictory functionality.

II. BASIC CONCEPTS FOR UNDERSTANDING POLITICS & THE STATE

1. POLITICS
   1.1 Practice in general
   1.2 General format of practice: raw materials/means-of-production/transformation/product
   1.3 Three practices:
     - Economic practice: transforms nature (into use-values)
     - Ideological practice: transforms human lived experience (into subjectivity).
     - Political Practice = human social action that transforms power relations
   1.4 Reproduction as Transformation.
   1.5 Type of Practice vs Aspect of Practice.
   1.6 Multiplicity of Types of Political Practice.

2. POLITICAL POWER
   2.1 Power in General.
   2.2 Instrumental & structural power.
   2.3 Means & efficacy of Instruments of power.
   2.4 Organizations as the “Means” of Politics.

3. DOMINATION
   3.1 Power vs Domination as concepts.
   3.2 The Multiple “faces” of power/domination.
     - A dominates B when A can get B to do something even over the objections of B: instrumental power
     - A dominates B when A can define the range of alternatives open to B
     - A dominates B when A is able to realize A’s interests at the expense of B’s interests
   3.3 System-logic notions of power/domination
     - Systemic power: power over what game is to be played: revolutionary v counterrevolutionary politics;
     - Organizational power: power over the rules of the game: reformist v reactionary politics;
     - Situational power: power over plays within a given set of rules: liberal vs conservative politics.

4. THE STATE
   4.1 The state = (1) the most super-ordinate, (2) territorially centralized (3) institution of domination =
   supreme institution of “ruling-making, rule-applying, rule-adjudicating, rule-enforcing and rule-defending” (Therborn)
   4.2 Contrast with Weberian definitions and some Marxist definitions.
   4.3 Variability in the degree of stateness.

5. STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY