

(4) State and Society (26/10)

What is a state?

Common understanding: the state is individuals or institutions of individuals that have power to coerce individuals or make them do smth. with violence

Problems with this understanding:

(1) **Agency**: do individuals really have the ability to change things, or is the system that determines their actions? Classical liberal political theory tends to give individuals full agency, Marx and Marxists (Engels, Plekhanov, Lenin) and Structuralists (early Foucault's power relations) deprive individuals of agency. Most of the contemporary political theorists (aristotelian liberal H.Arendt, communitarian liberal C.Taylor, feminist J.Butler, post-Marxist E.Laclau & agonal liberal C. Mouffe, post-structuralist J. Ranciere, P. Bourdieu, traditionalist A. Dugin) agree that agency is the responsibility of a person to act within a web of deterministic relations.

(2) **Power**: what is it? How do people coerce other people?

(3) **Institutions**: what are they

(4) **Violence**: can states survive without it?

History of the concept

- (1) **Idealistic** approach: (Plato, "Πολιτεία" 360 BC)
 - (a) Ideal state = normal state. But ideas (*eidōs*) exist only in the world of ideas, not in the real world.
 - (b) In the real world real states are distorted/corrupted manifestations of the ideal state. Some states are more distorted than others.
 - (c) The state should be structured hierarchically.
 - (i) Guardians think and rule
 - (ii) Auxiliaries protect the state
 - (iii) Craftsmen trade and produce material things
 - (d) The state is based on virtues, the most important is justice.
- (2) **Christian scholastic** approach: (St. Augustine, *City of God*, 426 AD)
 - (a) the idea of the state is to protect Christianity from heathens
 - (b) There are two Cities: Earthly and Heavenly. The Earthly city is corrupt, but Christians still need it to allocate resources. The goal of a Christian is the salvation of the soul (afterlife in Heaven), not the perfection of the Earthly city, which will ever be more or less corrupt.
 - (c) The Earthly city is corrupt because of the Original Sin (God has created Man free from desire to control and rule)
- (3) **Social contract** approach - Hobbes and Locke
- (4) **Economic** approach - Adam Smith and economics as nature
- (5) **Historicist** approach (*Engels*, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, 1884)

- (a) Division of labor and labor productivity growth leads to creation of trade and property. Trade and property lead to class exploitation. Which leads to formation of the state.
- (6) **Institutional** approach: the state is the institutionalized racket (Mancur Olson, Dictatorship, Democracy and Development, 1993)
- (a) Stationary bandits create incentives for the population to prosper to tax it.
- (b) Example: Private military contractor "Rus" that controlled the Baltic-Volga and Varangian-Greeks trade routes.

Spatial-temporal continuity, space-time continuum (since beginning of 20c)
post-Heidegger meta-approach > structuralism

(1) **Time**: history + present + future (societal goal or lack thereof, "Russian idea" or "Shining city on a hill")

(2) **Space**: physical territory (rivers, lands), borders (*division,),

material resources: carbohydrates, precious metals, people, taxes

(3) **Relations** between them - institutions that consist of practices

- ideology, financial/administrative system
- recognition
- sovereignty