

Week 3. February 2, 2017
Goran Therborn – What does the ruling class do when it rules

DISCUSSION AGENDA

General Concepts

1. The distinction between *state power* and *state apparatus*: What does this mean in terms of the claim that the state has a class character? (Tamara) The possible disjuncture of state power and state apparatus: could this be stable? (Kaan) What does it mean to say that the state apparatus is “a relation”? (Sarah)
2. Contrast of state-as-subject vs state-as-organizational structure: Is Therborn’s rejection of subjectivist views of the state justified? (Kurt)
3. What does system’s theory/language add to standard Marxism? (Griffin)
4. What evidence would support or undermine Therborn’s Model? (Aaron)
5. How do we reconcile the essentialism of Therborn’s basic typology with the fluidity of the concrete existence of states in historico-social time? (Samina)

The capitalist state

6. Therborn’s formulation of the Public/private boundary in the capitalist and socialist state: what precisely does this mean? Is it satisfactory? Is state interference with sexuality a remnant of the “feudal state” public/private boundary? (Youbin, Loren)
7. How should we understand a capitalist state that fails to uphold its core functions? (Benny)

Democracy

8. Is India a counterexample to Therborn’s claims about “representativeness” in capitalist democracy? (Youbin)
9. How would Therborn’s model of the socialist state accommodate more democratic forms of organization? Is a competitive democracy intrinsically capitalist? (Janaina, Courtney)

The socialist state

10. Therborn claims that “bureaucracy, technocracy and representative democracy need to be smashed” and b) that “cadre organization” and “mass involvement according to political line” constitute their replacement in a socialist state. Is this convincing? (Kris)
11. Is Therborn’s account of the Soviet State credible? Was this really a “socialist” state? (Masoud)

Strategies, transformation

12. What is most useful from the book for Left governments (eg. Syriza)? (Pete)