

contradiction of society with itself."

The State as Marx puts it is "the official resume of society."⁷⁷ For him, "the political State, within the limits of its form, expresses sub specie riae publicae all the social conflicts, needs and interests."⁷⁸

Not unlike Engels and Marx, Lenin also characterizes the political (including the State and political class struggle) as "a concentrated expression of economics." The State, for him, appears to be the place in which we can decipher the unity of structures and from which we can derive our knowledge of this unity:

"The only field in which this knowledge can be gained is that constituted by the relation of all the classes and strata of the population to the State and the government; i.e., the field constituted by the relation of all classes to each other."⁷⁹

In this sense, the State is the "official representative" of society, as Engler calls it. Representative, here, is interpreted by Poulantzas in the sense of the place where the unity of a formation is deciphered; still in this sense, the State is also "the place where the ruptural situation (situation de rupture) of this unity can be deciphered."⁸⁰

It is in this sense that the State is a relation, not a thing; more precisely, a condensed relation. This relation between the State and the articulation which specifies a formation originates, according to Poulantzas, precisely in the fact that the State has a function of "order" in political class conflicts, and also of global order as the cohesive factor of unity. The State prevents the political class conflict from breaking out in so far as this conflict reflects the unity of a formation; the State, in other words, prevents classes and "society" from consuming themselves. That is, it prevents the social formation from bursting apart.

Viewed dialectically, the relation of the "base" to the "superstructure",