

Functionalism

Sociology

How functionalists explain an institution by what it does for the wider system.

The model, and the standing objections to it.

The argument

Society is a system of interdependent parts.

Institutions persist because they meet needs.

Value consensus is what integrates the whole.

Parsons' AGIL: adapt, goals, integrate, latency.

Merton: manifest and latent functions.

Merton adds dysfunctions and functional equivalents.

Standing objections

Teleology: an effect used as a cause.

Consensus assumed rather than demonstrated.

Conflict and power are under-described.

Change is hard to explain from equilibrium.

Actors appear over-socialised, with no agency.

It can justify an arrangement by describing it.

Educational reference. Functionalism is a lens, not a verdict: 'it has a function' is a hypothesis that needs evidence.