Utopias

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CHAPTER SIX
UTOPIAS

PIERRE BOURDIEU TEACHING AT THE COLLÈGE DE FRANCE.
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Chapter Six

1. Introduction

I have taken the reader on a long journey, from the swirling politics of 1920’s Italy, through the turmoil of the second world war, fascism, the Fordism and Post-Fordism of post-war Britain, to the end of the exhausted Blair-Brown project of the British Labour party. I am keen now to see what remains of left state theorising as writers continue to struggle with these same theories of the state, the same questions concerning the future of capitalism, and the issue of progress in human societies. I want to canvass a series of question here in this last chapter – how has this theory of the state – the theory that explains how the mad ride of capitalism has survived revolution, dissent, corruption, chaotic mismanagement and hopeless inefficiencies, not to mention ruthless competition and deregulation – how has it survived? Do these theories of the state have anything still to say about the present condition of what Hall called ‘late-late capitalism’, and, if they do, what kind of theories now seem operative, useful in explaining what is going on, and predictive of future events. This is an especially pertinent question, since, after an extended period of neoliberal rule, both in the U.K. and in the United States, as well as elsewhere, one might reasonably ask the question as to what role the state can possibly play, now that the state has been cut back, dismissed, attacked and replaced by market forces in so many areas.1 Or,

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1 This is perhaps one of the greatest delusions of neoliberalism. The first step Donald Trump took after taking office in 2017 was to try to appoint 10,000 new federal officers to deal with immigration issues. In commenting on the Thatcher régime of the 1970s, the Economist wrote: ‘She was also an enemy of big government who presided over a huge expansion of it.’ (Recovered from http://www.economist.com/blogs/blighty/2013/04/margaret-thatcher-0, February 23, 2017). The right-wing Cato Institute commented about Reagan that: ‘Reagan failed to radically reduce the size of government. The 1981 budget eliminated one program: the Comprehensive Employment Training Act of 1974, a public sector employment boondoggle that had grown rapidly under Carter. Budget experts John Cogan and Timothy Muris discovered that overall domestic discretionary spending (including defense spending but not entitlements) grew only slightly less than the inflation rate during Reagan’s presidency. By 1989, such spending almost equaled its 1981 level, adjusted for inflation. Initial cuts were followed by spending increases. Spending by the Department of Education, for example, which Reagan had promised to eliminate in 1980, rose by 14 percent during his two terms after being reduced in 1981. Between 1980 and 1987, the three largest entitlements (Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid) increased their spending by 84 percent, a total of $145 billion.’ (Recovered from https://www.cato.org/policy-report/marchapril-2010/limiting-government-1980-2010 on February 23, 2017.)
indeed, are we now in a period beyond theories of the state, and the era of the state itself? Does the future seem to be stateless, and, if not, what account can we give of the future of the state and state theory? Does utopia still exist somewhere on the theoretical horizon?

Of course, this long, confused, awkward and unsettling discussion of the state was always really about utopia. It was always about the pathway out of despair, poverty, misery and disharmony to a more egalitarian world, in which some form of justice, security and harmony might prevail. The path forward usually involved the state as the agent of social progress, and the only agent capable of taking on the ‘forces of reaction’ – the feudal landlords, the capitalists, the apathetic and the cynics, the military and the police, and all those who opposed the furtherance of justice for the dispossessed, and there were many. In order to think about that state and socialism, theorists of the state had always to hope for a utopia somewhere in the future. Do they still think about this future, and does the state still play a part in their thinking? To form an answer, I examine the work of Erik Olin Wright, who has been working on the issue of progressive utopias for some time, and continue with Pierre Bourdieu’s monumental work on the State, before ending with some very recent formulations, in the work of Jules Boykoff, Naomi Klein and George Monbiot.

2. Erik Olin Wright and Utopia

The American sociologist Erik Olin Wright has long been interested in Marxist theories of the state, and early on paid close attention to the work of Nicos Poulantzas. More recently, he has paid close and extended attention to utopias. Completing his doctorate at Berkeley in 1976, he was initially influenced and radicalized by the experience of the Vietnam War, and the protests that resulted around that war. His first book, The Politics of Punishment,2 comprised an analysis on the American prison system. He starts with a striking paragraph:

If you are a typical American citizen, chances are that in your life you have committed some crime for which you could have been sent to jail or prison. In all probability, you have stolen something from a store, cheated on your income tax, or committed some other punishable offense. Similarly, as a typical American citizen, chances are that you have been the victim of a crime. Your house has been burglarized, your car has been stolen, or you have been cheated by a fraudulent repairman. If you are an American citizen

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who is poor, chances are that you have been the victim of crime many times.\(^3\)

For Wright, the politics of crime is a direct result of the political decision to establish and maintain a social structure that exhibits dramatic differences in power and wealth among its community members.\(^4\) This early work foreshadows two major themes that propelled much of Wright’s work for the following years – social class and inequality, on the one hand, and the role of the state in structuring society on the other. Of course, in much Marxist work, themes of class and state are tightly connected, and they are in Wright’s work. In this early work, there is a clear structuralism in Wright’s formulations. The state decides certain policies, and the result is social inequality or crime, or uneven experiences of crime according to class. This is perhaps too crude a caricature of Wright’s work, even at this early stage, and the book is a wonderful account of a problem that would challenge leftist writers for years to come,\(^5\) and it has much subtlety and thoughtfulness in its pages. Nonetheless, the relation between the state, social class and rates of punishment is unambiguous:

> Prisons in the United States are primarily used to punish those crimes, such as burglary, robbery, and assault, which are typically committed by the lower classes. The result is that prisons in this country are disproportionately filled with the poor and the uneducated.\(^6\)

Wright claims that most of American crime is conducted by those in the wealthier classes, but that these crimes, which are relatively safe to commit, and which are shielded from the public eye, are rarely sanctioned. The text is heavily documented with evidence, tables and statistics. What follows is a detailed account of life in San Quentin Prison\(^7\) that Wright gathered during a year of visiting. Wright described the régime in such institutions as ‘Liberal Totalitarianism’.\(^8\) Liberal goals were merged with totalitarian control over the lives of prisoners. Racism seemed to be a fundamental issue, but it was not the only source of trouble. There is a harrowing account of life in solitary isolation by Thomas Lopez Meneweather,\(^9\) followed by stories of attempted murder, and a picture of relentless and brutal violence and prejudice emerges.


\(^4\) Ibid., page 4.


\(^7\) A prison located near San Francisco, which Wright visited as a prison chaplain during 1970 and 1971.

\(^8\) The title of Chapter Seven.

\(^9\) Chapter Nine,
Wright concludes with a chapter that connects prisons with broad structures of social class and inequality, and with the state. While there is hardly a theory of the state in operation here, there is clearly a marxistant undercurrent shaping the writing.

In *Class, Crisis and the State* Wright spread his wings. The book was to be instrumental in marking him out as a leading Marxist intellectual in American sociology at a time when Marxism was gaining acolytes in the wake of the Vietnam War. And here we see a deep concern with the writing of Nicos Poulantzas, and especially his theory of social class. This concern with social class was to lead Wright to undertake a massive international project on class structure. He also sets out an original theory of the state. Again, this is a straightforward structural Marxism to begin with. The purpose of the work is to reveal the underlying structures that shape the world of appearances. What follows is a detailed exposition of the Poulantzas-inspired theory of social class. Wright begins:

All Marxists agree that manual workers directly engaged in the production of physical commodities for private capital fall into the working class.

While this may be true, thus solving one of the great problems of class theory, it is hardly the whole story. This is because, Wright comments, social classes are ‘real social forces and they have real consequences’. Where, therefore, do the boundaries of the classes reside? To answer this question, Wright is guided by Poulantzas’s *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. He begins by setting out the main elements of the Poulantzan argument. First, classes, for Poulantzas, are defined through class struggle. Classes are not just boxes or pigeon holes into which people can be placed. Second, at the same time, however, classes designate objective positions in the social order. These

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10 Wright, page 313.
12 In the 1980s, I was the New Zealand project director in Wright’s program.
13 There are systematic references to Althusser and to structuralist theory here. It appears Wright’s attempt is to develop a logic of causality from this form of theory, and to thus render the work available for empirical work. Indeed on pages 15ff., Wright explicitly sets out to diagram some of the ‘structured totalities’ embodied in Althusser’s writing. In this diagramming of Althusserian structuralism, Wright also start to fashion his theory of the state.
14 Ibid., page 30.
15 Ibid.
17 I have discussed this theory at great length in the section on Poulantzas, so the briefest of accounts will suffice here. Wright’s account runs from pages 32 to 61.
positions exist independent of the will of the agents that fill these positions. The method by which these positions are reproduced he refers to as ‘the structural determination of class’. Finally, classes exist at the economic, political and ideological levels. This latter breakthrough in thinking gained from Poulantzas will prove crucial in Wright’s later elaboration of the class structure.

Wright is especially intrigued by Poulantzas’s attempt to define the new petty bourgeoisie. Traditionally, the petty bourgeoisie were easy enough to find – they comprised the self-employed. Small farmers, shopkeepers, and self-employed artisans filled this category. Historical change had meant the reduction of numbers of people in this category, but, in the Poulantzian view, they have been replaced by an emerging group of ‘new petty bourgeoisie’. This new group are separated from the workers because of their engagement in mental work, rather than manual labour. At the same time, this new category share ideological similarities with the old petty bourgeoisie. This new class is both dominated by capital, and is in a position to dominate the working class. This comprises the political position of the new petty bourgeoisie. Ideologically this class is also separated from the working class because of their access to ‘secret knowledge’, an entire range of experts knowledgeable about the process of production. They thus constitute a class in domination over the working class, even while they are, at the same time, dominated by capitalist interests. The major element that brings the old and the new petty bourgeoisie together is ideology. A common set of values is there in each case, according to Poulantzas – a belief in individualism, careers and upward mobility; reformism, the renovation of the system through politics; and a belief in what Poulantzas calls ‘power fetishism’, the notion that the state is an inherently neutral force that can steer society forward in a productive way, and mediate between classes. Wright concludes with an assessment of the bourgeoisie themselves. Here he is at pains to distinguish between ownership and possession. This is important because Wright wants to pull out managers from owners in the class structure. Poulantzas argues that managers and capitalists both belong in the bourgeoisie. But in large companies especially, managers often have possession of the means of production, that is, the capacity to direct production, without being owners of the company. Poulantzas nonetheless insists that owners and managers comprise a single bourgeois class. In addition, state managers, while not directly managing capital, are said to belong to the bourgeois class because

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18 Ibid., page 33.
19 Ibid., page 39.
20 Ibid., page 42.
they direct the state in the interests of capital.\textsuperscript{21}

Wright disagrees on \textit{three} counts – there are problems in defining productive labour; there is a lack of correspondence between productive and unproductive labour and actual position in the labour force; there is a lack of fundamental difference in economic interest between productive and unproductive workers.\textsuperscript{22} In his assessment of the political and ideological criteria, he is unhappy with the exclusion of individuals who do not, on all criteria, and not just the economic, line up with the proletariat. This is because Poulantzas appears to give equal status to the ideological and political dimensions of class in comparison with the economic.\textsuperscript{23} This is a plausible judgement. If we take Poulantzas at his word, and the economic is to be considered determinant in the last instance, then these criteria cannot be awarded equal status. Nor is Wright happy with Poulantzas’s use of political criteria; indeed Wright wants to claim that the theoretical strategies Poulantzas uses are not political at all. And as far as ideology is concerned, Wright is not satisfied with the mental/manual division of labour as the sole criterion in use.\textsuperscript{24} Wright then goes on to examine the empirical consequences of Poulantzas’s theorizing, and especially the size of the working class. His conclusion is that if we take Poulantzas’s theoretical criteria for the working class seriously, then the American proletariat is reduced to a small minority.\textsuperscript{25}

When he turns his attention to the petty bourgeoisie, he sees that Poulantzas relies entirely on ideological criteria to bring the old and the new petty bourgeoisie together, when it is clear that their economic position is different. And in terms of the bourgeoisie themselves, he is not willing to throw the managers in with the owners. On any plausible theoretical grounds, this distinction does not stand scrutiny. The debate centres on ownership and possession. When managers own part of the business, then perhaps owners and managers can be clumped together. But when possession and ownership are separate, this common class position is not well founded. Furthermore, claims Wright, economic ownership and possession are not black and white categories; each of them is subject to gradations and ambiguities.\textsuperscript{26}

As an alternative, Wright develops a model of class structure in which he proposes the category of ‘\textit{contradictory class locations}’ existing between the major

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., page 43.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., page 46. These arguments are then set out in detail in pages 46-50.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., page 51.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., page 53.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., page 58.
\textsuperscript{26} Wright, op. cit., pages 60-61.
classes. Along with the bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie, the contradictory class positions include small employers, semi-autonomous wage earners, and managers and supervisors. He then makes an assessment of the size of each class and contradictory class location in the United States, concluding that such a strategy yields a very small bourgeois class of 1-2%, a proletariat of between 41% and 54%, and a petty bourgeoisie of about 4.5%, with contradictory categories making up the rest.

This is a far more politicist reading than Poulantzas would have allowed. Wright’s vision of the class structure employs three criteria – ‘control of labour power, control of the physical means of production and control of investments and resources’. If control is all that is at work, then while economics is implicit in each criterion, the ideological dimension seems to have disappeared entirely. Only when discussing ‘Employees in political and ideological apparatuses’ do ideological elements come to the fore. There is also an implicit instrumentalist theory of the state at work here, to which we shall return to below. The account is profoundly structuralist, focusing primarily on the occupation of certain positions within the class structure. He corrects himself immediately, of course, reminding us that class struggle is the most important dimension of the class system, but in a sense the damage has already been done. The class structure has been set out before this discussion occurs. All this analytical work is important, Wright concludes, because finding out the boundary of the working class enables us to see the possibilities for socialism. Understanding the dimensions of the contradictory class locations enables us to understand the work needed to be done in a revolutionary situation to draw such elements into the class struggle.

In chapter five, Wright fully reviews leftist theories of the state. We are again in the realm of utopias. The focus here is on socialist strategies, and we begin with Lenin, and his notion that bourgeois democracies were ‘mere talking shops’. Since bureaucracies were obstructive to the interests of the working class, then the only way forward was the smashing of the state. Since Lenin’s

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27 The diagram setting these structure out is to be found on page 63.
28 Wright’s phrase, page 87.
29 Ibid., page 94.
30 Ibid., page 95.
31 Ibid., page 97. The word ‘occupy’ occurs six times on page 97 as Wright summarizes his position on classes.
32 See pages 98ff.
33 Ibid., page 108.
34 Ibid., page 109.
35 Ibid., page 226.
time, state monopoly capitalism has emerged and Eurocommunist parties have been willing to become involved in state activities, as we have seen above in the case of New Times. Wright’s particular interest is to see if the state apparatus can be used to destroy the capitalist state itself.\footnote{Ibid., page 227.} Wright reviews the social-democratic compromise of the post-war era as a mechanism for arriving at socialism one policy at a time, a form of socialist incrementalism. Such a view implicitly suggests that the state is a neutral instrument that can be used by working class interests to secure advantages, if not revolution. Wright takes Lenin’s position to be that, while involvement with the state and democratic elections might be useful in educating the working class, the state must, in the last instance, be smashed as being fundamentally inimical to the interests of the broad masses.\footnote{See pages 228-229, and especially footnotes 5. There are hints of Wright’s interest in scientific socialism, and this may refer to Althusser’s theoretical schemings. See especially footnote 8, page 231.} In Wright’s reasoning, the structure of the social democratic state makes it impossible for the capitalist state to achieve socialist ends. It may be possible, he surmises, for a social democratic government of the left to shift the structure of the state to such a degree that the shape of the state is altered, and the ‘class selectivity’ of the state is also changed. Such changes might also alter the very nature of the class structure itself.\footnote{Ibid., page 232.} But this seems unlikely in the United States, and Wright confesses to lacking the knowledge to comment on Europe.\footnote{Wright accepts the implausibility of such a strategy in the United States in footnote 11.} For Wright, the fundamental interests of the working class in revolution have usually been replaced by the need to respond to immediate interests through the ballot box. Can this be changed, given the challenges now (in 1978) facing the capitalist system? The development of the welfare state had made this more likely since now labour power has become somewhat less commodified.\footnote{Ibid., page 235.} But at the same time, many women had entered the workforce since World War Two, and thus their labour had become more commodified. Nonetheless, the rise of the welfare state does offer some opportunities. Second, it is clear that the global economic crisis will require additional state intervention for the ‘problem to be solved’, and this offers further political opportunities. And:

Whereas Lenin could refer to the bureaucratic personnel as tied to the bourgeoise “through a thousand threads”, which guaranteed their loyalty to the capitalist class, the class character of state bureaucratic positions can no
longer be characterized in such a simple manner.\textsuperscript{41}

The key, Wright argues, is for state workers to be organized around a certain set of political demands, such as better social services, better schools, and so on.\textsuperscript{42} In the end, the question comes down to whether a left government can help organize the political capacities of the working class. Here Poulantzas makes his first appearance as the theorist of the ‘power bloc’, the state organising the ruling class while disorganizing the working class.\textsuperscript{43} Can the state change direction so that the working class are no longer fractured, but rather organized? This Poulantzian theme colours the pages that follow.

At the same time, the grip of bourgeois hegemony must be loosened. Again, this language gestures towards Gramsci and Poulantzas, but no reference is made. This speaks to the issue of fighting for the national common sense, an argument that Hall was later to take so seriously. Without a loosening of this hegemony, and an alternative hegemony being developed from below, it seems unlikely to Wright that any revolutionary change is possible. Wright ends the chapter with consideration of the ‘Problem of Repression’.\textsuperscript{44} Here he argues that while the first forms of resistance to change from the bourgeoisie might involve economic resistance, the fact that the state is now so widely embedded in economic relations would limit this capacity. What, then, are the possibilities for armed resistance in such circumstances? This will depend on the specific conditions that might prevail. If the repressive state apparatus is fragmentary, as in Cuba, China or Russia, then working class control might be possible. If, on the other hand, as in Chile, the military side unambiguously with the ruling class, repression will be used to head changes to the left.\textsuperscript{45} Thus, whether the state can ever be used to bring about a socialist revolution still hangs in the air.

For the next few years, Wright continued with his work on income inequality and social class.\textsuperscript{46} And in Reconstructing Marxism,\textsuperscript{47} Wright revisited the topic

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, page 239.
\textsuperscript{42} See pages 240-241.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., page 241.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., pages 249-252.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., page 251.
\textsuperscript{46} See, for example, his Class Structure and Income Determination, Academic Press, 1979, Cambridge, Mass. See also a wide range of further publications, and especially Classes, Verso, New York, 1985 ; The Debate on Class edited by Erik Wright, Verso, New York, 1989 ; Interrogating Inequality, Verso, New York, 1994 ; and Class Counts, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, as well as many articles and other publications.
of socialist strategy and socialist futures. In a brief excursus, Wright and his co-workers start by suggesting the Marxist project appeared largely spent:

We do not think that there is any reason, in general, to support … comprehensive claims of class primacy, and in any case, the legitimacy of the distinctively Marxist emancipatory project does not depend on class oppression being more “fundamental” than other forms of oppression.\textsuperscript{48}

The dual problem for Marxism at that moment, as the writers see it, is, \textit{first}, the ‘stagnation and decay of authoritarian state socialist societies’,\textsuperscript{49} but \textit{second}, the failure of the ‘strong’ historical classical materialist project. This latter project now seems to them at an end:

While the traditional model no longer seems tenable, even in principle, many Marxist intellectuals are unhappy with the emerging alternative – a social theory with less ambitious explanatory scope and with less certainty about its explanatory capabilities. The sense of crisis that results reflects a deep ambivalence over the implications of this transformation of a comprehensive emancipatory theory to a more restricted account of particular social processes and tendencies.\textsuperscript{50}

The book ends on a note of profound political pessimism, and there is little talk of utopia – indeed, the end of utopian thinking seems to be implied. Nor is there any advanced theorising on the state, nor any political program proposed that might bring about a coalition of interests based on ethnicity, gender and class – the multiple oppressions theory that is hinted at towards the end.

In \textit{Interrogating Inequality},\textsuperscript{51} the utopian current is revisited, however. Wright comments:

For well over a century, those who have dreamed of a world in which inequalities of material well-being have been drastically reduced or even eliminated have looked to socialism as a way of accomplishing this goal.\textsuperscript{52}

In ‘Capitalism’s Futures’, Wright rehearses some possibilities for the future of capitalist societies. Certainly here there is much consideration of a statist

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., page 188.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., pages 189-190, their phrase.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., page 191.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Interrogating Inequality : essays on class analysis, socialism and Marxism}, Verso, New York, 1994.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., page 109.
society, in which the future might rest in the hands of bureaucrats, and various forms of possible socialist and quasi-socialist futures are imagined – state capitalist production; workers’ self-management production; socialist production; party-bureaucrat socialist production; and market socialism. Many diagrams and tables follow as each form of future is examined. Wright’s conclusions are that if his reasoning is sound, then historical materialism itself will need to shift ground. If there are many possible paths to the future, then the linear models of the past must be rejected. Wright finally argues that socialists must be much more conscious of the alternatives they are proposing, and especially pay attention for the need to be radically democratic. There is no mention here of the multiple oppressions theory that had raised its head earlier in Reconstructing Marxism. The debate stays strictly within the socialist agenda. But later, in ‘Explanation and Emancipation in Marxism and Feminism’, the two sources of oppression are jointly considered. Yet he does not conclude with any serious political proposals for a joint future. In Deepening Democracy, however, Wright turns back to a consideration of the broader political questions of the future. The state seems at first to be central to these concerns:

As the tasks of the state have become more complex and the size of politics larger and more heterogeneous, the institutional forms of liberal democracy developed in the nineteenth century – representative democracy plus techno-bureaucratic administration – seem increasingly ill-suited to the novel problems we face in the twenty-first century.

‘Beyond the State’ might easily be the title of this book at first glance. What follows are case studies in democracy and emancipation in four communities – neighbourhood governance in Chicago; habitat conservation in the United States; participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil; and democratic reforms in West Bengal and Kerala, India. The authors continue with a detailed account of these projects and a theoretical proposal – what the authors refer to as ‘Empowered Participatory Governance,’ which they suggest is a ‘model of deliberative democratic practice.’ The elements of ‘EPG’ are to focus on specific tangible problems; to involve ordinary people

53 Pages 133ff.
54 This list appears on page 139.
55 Ibid., page 154.
56 Ibid., page 155.
58 Ibid., page 3.
59 These projects are listed on page 5.
60 Ibid., page 15.
close to these problems; and to produce solutions to these problems.\textsuperscript{61} This strategy, in turn, is based on three principles:

(1) the devolution of public decision authority to empowered local units, (2) the creation of formal linkages of responsibility, resource distribution, and communication that connect these units to each other and to superordinate, centralized authorities, (3) the use and generation of new state institutions to support and guide these decentered problem-solving efforts.\textsuperscript{62}

The state appears to be creeping back in here, but it is the state being built from the bottom, rather than a state developing from some abstract higher authority. Alternative strategies are outlined, and the advantages of EPG are indicated. Wright and Fung are suggesting a new form of state:

Since empowered participatory governance targets problems and solicits participation localized in both issue and geographic space, its institutional reality requires the commensurate reorganization of the state apparatus. It entails the administrative and political devolution of power to local action units – such as neighborhood councils, personnel in individual workplaces, and delineated natural habitats – charged with devising and implementing solutions and held accountable to performance criteria. The bodies in the reforms below are not merely advisory, but rather creatures of a transformed state endowed with substantial public authority.\textsuperscript{63}

The new approach requires us to rethink our politics and establish, instead of the old models, a permanent\textsuperscript{64} systems of grassroots politics. The attempt here is to get the existing state involved:

A … characteristic of these experiments is that they colonize state power and transform formal governance institutions.\textsuperscript{65}

Thus, the authors argue, these are less radical approaches than those who wish to ‘fight the power’, but they are more radical in that they wish to secure the resources of the state to bring changes about. The hope is to keep an enduring culture of participation alive, and not have such activities be a one-issue phenomenon after which power is dissolved back into the isolated, centralised state.

What results, the authors continue, is, following John Stuart Mill, a better
form of outcome for the community, and a better quality of citizen, measured by their level of knowledge and their degree of participation in the political process to arrange the delivery of public goods. The authors conclude that the new strategy will not work in all social and political settings. However, in the contemporary world of so-called democratic societies, belief in the institutions of social democratic management is at an all-time low, and there is an urgent need to revitalise these institutions:

We believe that this decline in confidence in the democratic affirmative state does not reflect an actual exhaustion of democratic potential but rather the political triumph of antistatist neoliberalism. While ultimately a revitalization of democratic institutions on a wide scale requires political mobilization, that challenge also requires new visions for how democratic institutions can advance urgent social goals.66

A large section of the book then considers each of the aforementioned political experiments in turn. Then a series of commentaries by other authors are presented before the authors draw some conclusions in their epilogue. Here they seek to examine further the preconditions for participatory power that might enable fruitful local political involvement to occur.67 A central notion is the concept of counter-vailing power – how it is possible to establish a power base to compete with the existing powers structures?68 The authors then establish a typology of power in which the governance structure and the character of decision-making are the variables.69 Governance can be top down or participatory; decision-making can be adversarial or collaborative. ‘Empowered Participatory Governance’ (EPG) is clearly that form of politics that is participatory and collaborative. They conclude with a hopeful message:

The chorus of support in favor of participatory collaboration is growing. Its natural constituents are local organizations … Pressed from below by these sources and perhaps also by the disappointments of their own approaches, leaders of national adversarial organizations may eventually accept the limitations of top-down governance strategies. When they do so, they may begin to make the difficult transformations of scale, competence, and political framing necessary for them to become effective actors in participatory collaborative governance schemes.70

66 Ibid., page 40.
67 Ibid., page 259.
68 Ibid., page 260.
69 Ibid., page 262.
70 Ibid., page 285.
The hope clearly is that ‘emerging governance structures’ will evolve to shape and support these new endeavours. Thus there is a sense of optimism, of hopefulness for a better political future, and a gesture towards a new state theory – the colonization of the local state, at least, by the participatory actions of local citizens, thereby to secure a better provision of public goods.

The account is at one and the same time interesting, sometimes exciting, and simultaneously disappointing. Most interestingly, there is no harking back to Marx, or to Lenin, or even to more recent writers such as Poulantzas. Indeed, the break with orthodox leftism is almost entirely complete. Instead, the foundational authors named in the text are John Stuart Mill and John Dewey. The theory of Left Statism has now moved into the shadows. Some of the case studies are hopeful, hardly utopian since they actually occurred, but hopeful in their suggestion that ideas can work in actually existing democracies and in other contexts. There is a darkening gloom, though, hanging over the text. It is there particularly in the criticisms that the authors themselves propose, and it is reinforced and extended by the critical authors that add to the original thesis with further complications and obstacles, difficulties and complaints. It remains, nonetheless, utopian in character, utopian in the best way, in that it can show concrete examples of successful projects.

In ‘The Real Utopias Project’, Wright deals with future possibilities head-on. Wright tells us he turned to the question of utopias in 1992, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the declaration of the ‘End of History’. The attempt, he tells us, was to deepen the discussion of alternatives to the existing relations of power, inequality and privilege. In Envisioning Real Utopias he comments:

There was a time, not so long ago, when both critics and defenders of capitalism believed that “another world was possible.” It was generally called “socialism.” While the right condemned socialism as violating individual rights to property and unleashing monstrous forms of state oppression, and the left saw socialism as opening up new vistas of social equality, genuine freedom and the development of human potentials, both believed that a fundamental alternative to capitalism was possible.

Most people in the world today, especially in its economically developed regions, no longer believe in this possibility. Capitalism seems to be part of the natural order of things, and pessimism has replaced the optimism of the will that Gramsci once said would be essential if the world was to be

71 Ibid., page 286.
transformed.\textsuperscript{73}

Wright then draws out details of four examples of utopias - participatory city budgeting; Wikipedia; the Mondragon worker-owned cooperatives; and the notion of unconditional basic income – to illuminate his argument. The answer to the traditional utopian question – what should society look like - has long had an obvious and simple form from the left, so simple and so obvious that it is hardly worth repeating. What is the alternative to capitalism? The answer is socialism. What is the mechanism? The mechanism is the state. But given the neoliberal revolution of the 1980s, the state is no longer trusted, and socialism is a long-forgotten relic of thinking from the historic past. The natural state of neoliberal capitalism is now accepted worldwide, and the theories of the state that so captured the imagination of an earlier generation, because they seemed to explain the mechanisms of the future, are now redundant. These socialist, large-scale arguments founder, as Wright points out, on the ‘fatal conceit’ proposed by Hayek, that rational planning can produce a perfect, or at least a better, society. Of course, the Left reject such critiques and still argue that a socialist transformation is possible. But both sides of the argument still believe that things can and should be improved. His impulse is to overcome the cynicism that surrounds the present situation, and suggest options.

Wright then sets out the case against capitalism, and its systematic structuring of a variety of forms of oppression. Most of this is familiar territory to those on the left, but perhaps the various strands of complaints that routinely flavour the leftist discourse are usefully brought together here to make the case more powerfully than usual.\textsuperscript{74} Then Wright turns to alternatives, and Marx is again disinterred and brought back from the graveyard in Highgate to do his turn again. Wright sets out the Marxist project in five major theses. He then points out inadequacies – where would we be if we could not find errors in the old boy’s writings? This is an essential starting point in all the writings we have reviewed to date, and Wright’s recounting of Marx’s errors falls exactly into the same pattern. And in his ‘alternative formulation’\textsuperscript{75} he proposes a theory, not of dynamic trajectory, as in the case of Marx, but of ‘structural possibility’,\textsuperscript{76} which implies that we cannot predict what will happen, as Marxism sought to do, but instead can shed light on what might happen. It would be useful to have a road map to the future. But:

\textsuperscript{73} Introduction: ‘Why Real Utopias’, page 1, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{74} Wright is nothing if not thorough, covering everything from work to the arts and religion.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., page 107. Wright’s wording.
\textsuperscript{76} Wright’s wording again. The italics appear in the original on page 107.
Alas, there is no map, and no existing social theory is sufficiently powerful to even begin to construct such a comprehensive representation of possible social destinations, possible futures.\footnote{Ibid., page 108.}

If there isn’t a roadmap to the future, Wright suggests instead that we consider explanations of the future as a ‘voyage of exploration’.\footnote{Ibid.} In order to direct us forward, Wright exhorts us to use a ‘socialist compass’ which will provide the necessary principles on which to navigate our thrustings into the future.\footnote{Ibid., page 109.} The question, then, is what this socialist compass might entail. Wright begins his next chapter by clarifying some concepts – power; ownership; and the state, economy and civil society. Power is the capacity to realize one’s interests.\footnote{Ibid, page 112.} Ownership is multidimensional, comprising the agents of ownership, the objects of ownership, and the rights of ownership.\footnote{Ibid., pages 113ff.} In simple terms, Wright wants to argue that ownership generally means:

… the right to transfer property and the right over the surplus, and the terms “power” and “control” … describe the effective capacity to direct the use of the means of production.\footnote{Ibid., page 115.}

Wright also attempts a definition of the state as ‘the cluster of institutions, more or less coherently organized, which imposes binding rules and regulations over a territory’.\footnote{Ibid., page 118 – 119.} State power then becomes the capacity to enforce rules and regulations in this territory. The economy is defined as the realm of goods and services, and civil society as the universe of voluntary association. It therefore follows that capitalism is that system in which the means of production are privately owned, statism the same system, this time in the state’s hands, and socialism thus becomes an economic structure in which the means of production are socially owned and directed through what Wright calls ‘social power’ – the power that arises from the ‘capacity to mobilize people’ voluntarily in civil society.\footnote{This is a paraphrase of Wright longer terminological exposition to be found on pages 120-121.} The future of socialist society, in Wright’s eyes, will always be connected to working-class power, but it will also include important non-class elements.\footnote{See footnote 11, page 123.} Wright thus opens the door to a world in which feminism, anti-racist movements and the politics of sexual
identity should be fully recognized within the ambit of socialism.

All societies are hybrids, he reminds us, having within them the elements of capitalism, socialism, statism, the gift economy, bartering, the household economy, and a variety of other forms of economic life. This suggests possibilities, because it proposes a view of the future in which no system entirely dominates. Thus it might reasonably be said on empirical grounds that elements of cooperative economic life sustain themselves even in the most capitalist societies, and that dictatorships, however repressive, always fail to bring about the ‘pure’ society that they planned to bring into being. Then Wright brings us to the three main elements of the ‘socialist compass’. It comprises:

1. Social empowerment over the way state power affects economic activity.
2. Social empowerment over the way economic power shapes economic activity.
3. Social empowerment directly over economic activity.

These ‘three directions of social empowerment’ lead to a variety of linkages that he is then at pains to set out in detail. He compares the new model to statist socialist, where power remains with the state, and with social democratic statism, the neoliberal model in which the state is still profoundly implicated, but neither model, of course, enables social empowerment to come into being. He also canvasses some more fruitful alternatives, including ‘Associational Democracy’, a form of corporatist coalition in which the state, civil society and the private sector collaborate in the management of the economy, which, in Wright’s view, may offer a path to social empowerment, and ‘Social Capitalism’, a system in which, for example, trade unions can come to manage large elements of the economy through enforced shareholding in large companies, as in the case of a proposed Swedish plan that he outlines. Wright also describes three further forms of economy and society – the cooperative market economy, in which he lays out the implications of cooperatives, in which workers collectively own the business, working together to form ‘large associations’, and thus enhancing the power of the movement; the social economy, by which he understands elements in the economy not driven by the market or the state. This includes the activities of

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87 Ibid., page 129.
88 Wright’s words, page 129.
89 Ibid., pages 136 – 137.
90 See pages 139 – 144 for further details.
non-profit organizations, and operations such as Wikipedia. Finally Wright explains participatory socialism which appears to offer the most direct pathway to the promised land of social empowerment:

... the state and civil society jointly organize and control various kinds of production of goods and services. In participatory socialism the role of the state is more persuasive and direct than in the social economy. The state does not simply provide funding and set the parameters; it is also, in various ways, directly involved in the organization and production of the economic activity. On the other hand, participatory socialism is also different from statist socialism, for here social power plays a role not simply through the ordinary channels of democratic control of state policies, but directly inside the productive activities themselves.91

For Wright, the state still plays a significant role in this post-capitalist society, if that is what it is.92 A true freedom among the associations of civil society would give rise to horrors, as well as to emancipatory opportunities, and thus, in Wright’s view, the state must chaperone the way forward. If this is a society in which capitalism has dissolved, or, at least, now plays a subordinate role, this does not mean the state has dissolved as well. Indeed, the state must remain involved to keep the trains running on time. None of this guarantees a more egalitarian future, but it does establish the terrain on which such a possibility is more likely.

In ‘Real Utopias’,93 Wright tries to show in concrete ways precisely what mechanisms will most likely bring about the changes he wants to see. These strategies will need to meet three criteria – they must meet the egalitarian emancipatory ideals set out above; they must be viable; they must provide a pathway to social empowerment.94 If we ask the question - is there a role for the state in the future of progressive societies, Wright’s answer is a resounding yes in most instances. Wright then rehearses a variety of forms of democracy – direct democracy, in which citizens vote directly on laws and policies; representative democracies, typical of advanced western societies; and associational democracies, in which collective organization, such as unions or business associations, are engaged in the decision-making.95 The question then arises as to which kinds of institutions allow this best form of democracy to occur. The Porto Alegre budgeting example is disinterred here,

91 Ibid., page 143.
92 If elements of capitalism still remain, it is hard to suggest that the historical enemy is now extinct.
93 Chapter six, pages 150 – 189.
94 Ibid., page 150.
95 This section summarises the discussion on pages 152 and 153.
and several conclusions drawn. Such mechanisms are empowered from the bottom up, they are pragmatic, and they are based on serious deliberations. The decision-making must really be devolved, and decisions must be brought to the centre again once made. Thus there is a major role for government and the state here. Finally such mechanisms require the formation of a counter-vailing power to resist the orthodox sources of authority. The strategy requires ‘popular mobilization.’

Wright then reviews three democratic initiatives. Bruce Ackerman’s proposal relates specifically to the United States. It proposes that at the beginning of each year, each citizen is given a card on which $50 is placed to be spent uniquely on electoral campaigns. If candidates accept such funds, they cannot accept funds from the traditional major donors. They will do so because there is much more money to be had from the cards. And such a strategy will itself become a weapon in political campaigns, since candidates taking the card will be able to declare themselves champions of democracy, whereas others will be clearly under the sway of vested interests. It would be a form of public financing that allows a much wider influence on the political system to come into being.

In a second proposal Wright considers the strategy of ‘random selection citizens’ assemblies’, following the way juries are picked, and how the legislative bodies were chosen in Athens in the early years of democracy. Would such a strategy work today – would it provide a viable mechanism towards social empowerment? The advantages are, to some extent, obvious. Such a polity would engage citizens directly, thus providing the possibility that the interests of ordinary citizens would be better represented than in traditional systems. We could see if those chosen accurately represent the population. Since the present polity is profoundly male-dominated, for example, it should be readily apparent that this change would alter the balance of representation. And if a process of serious deliberation were to occur, then the interests of the community should be more accurately represented than in alternative systems. Fishkin, Ackerman’s co-author in the

\[96\] Ibid., page 160ff.
\[97\] Ibid., page 145.
\[98\] Ibid., page 167ff. The reference is to Bruce Ackerman’s Voting with Dollars; A New Paradigm for Campaign Finance, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2004. Further proposals including Ackerman’s ‘Deliberation Day’, in which citizens are paid $150 to engage in policy deliberations on a national holiday, are also discussed. See Ackerman and James S. Fishkin. Deliberation Day, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2005.
\[99\] Ibid., pages 171ff.
writing of *Deliberation Day*, has conducted a series of experiments to test this proposal. In one, he gathers people together over a weekend to discuss an issue of general interest. Balanced information on the issue is distributed to the participants, then debate ensues which is televised and recorded. Changes in opinions are then recorded, the purpose being to show that such an ‘ordinary’ assembly is fully capable of assimilating information, debating issues, completing a process of deliberation, and making informed choices.

Then, in what appears to be, at first glance, a *third* proposal, Wright opens up the question of ‘associational democracy’. Since he has already dismissed this strategy as the least democratic to hand, this is perhaps surprising. But, he argues Cohen and Rogers have shown that associations can play a positive role of progressive politics. They do this in four ways: by pooling resources from otherwise disadvantaged groups; by assisting with citizen education; by providing information to decision-makers; and by helping with the problem of collective problem-solving. Deep democracy allows people control over their lives. In Wright’s interpretation, this strategy aids in developing such a condition. And associational democracy also offers an alternative to the market-driven solutions that are often proposed. This is a form of corporatism which many feel has outlived its usefulness as a strategy. Instead Cohen and Rogers argue more could be done with such a régime. An example from Quebec is cited as a way this might occur profitably. Further examples, one from Wisconsin concerning the issue of regional labour markets, another relating to habitat conservation, are also brought into play to bolster the argument.

Each of these three forms of democracy offers a way forward, in Wright’s eyes, towards a more deeply democratic society. What is needed, Wright concludes, is a ‘deepening’ of all three forms of democracy. In his last section on ‘real utopias’, Wright focuses on economic systems, and specifically the social power that controls economies. Rather than adopting the state-centred approach of the socialist past, Wright now wants to suggest a multiplicity of pathways exist that lead towards social empowerment. This is ‘market socialism’ in one form of another, so the taint of Blairism is about – the market cannot be avoided and must be included in all our plans. Wright

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100 See footnote 153.

101 Ibid., page 173.

102 See Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, *Associations and Democracy*, London, Verso, 1995. This seems to be a problem in organization in Wright’s book. There is a good time spent on this third proposal, but it is not cited at the beginning of the chapter, where two proposals are anticipated.

103 Chapter seven ‘Real Utopias II’, Pages 191 – 269.
immediately understands this, but he argues:

Few theorists today hold on to the belief that a complex, large-scale economy could be viable without some role for markets – understood as a system of decentralized, voluntary exchanges that are responsive to supply and demand – in economic coordination.\(^{104}\)

The question Wright is keen to answer is how, given that the market is inevitable, the social power of the broader society might be brought to bear on market relations. The possibility of socialism lies here – not in the ownership of the means of production, but instead in social empowerment. Thus the ‘social economy’ is the economy organized and controlled by social power.\(^{105}\) Wright cites Wikipedia and the Quebec social economy as examples of the new social forms. In Wikipedia, Wright sees an organization that is thoroughly anti-capitalist and egalitarian, with direct and open interaction among participants. It is managed by a democratic system of governance and regulation, and thus conforms in many ways to Wright’s notion of radical democratic egalitarianism.\(^{106}\) In the Quebec social economy, Wright finds state subsidies targeted towards the social economy,\(^{107}\) the emergence of social economy development funds governance through associational democracy, and a participatory form of organization.

Wright then turns his attention to the question of the unconditional basic income question, a proposal that had recently been raised in European circles.\(^{108}\) The value of the proposal lies in several progressive qualities that it embodies – it separates workers from the wage relation of capitalism; it creates more equality in labour markets; it solves the problem of poverty; and it provides a way of valorising the various care-giving activities that are devalued by markets. It could increase the power of organized labour, and it could clearly provide substantial support for the non-capitalist economy, thus encouraging social empowerment. Wright then rehearses a series of approaches that he groups under the heading ‘social capitalism’. These refer to organizations that impinge on the power of capital, of which trade unions are the most obvious example. The discussion leads to the question of whether unions, or associations like them, could orchestrate their efforts towards ownership of substantial part of the capitalist economy, such as had been proposed in Sweden in the 1970s. In Quebec, a solidarity fund has been

\(^{104}\) Ibid., page 192.
\(^{105}\) Ibid., page 193.
\(^{106}\) Ibid., page 199.
\(^{107}\) Ibid., page 209ff.
\(^{108}\) Ibid., page 219ff.
established to support small and medium businesses, which is a similar initiative on a smaller scale. The strategy has many elements of social empowerment that are attractive, including labour movement involvement, a social audit of possible companies in which investment might take place, a large number of working class investors through unions, and a long-term horizon, rather than an obsession with short-term profitability, the so-called ‘patient capital’ strategy. In addition, there was government support.

The history of cooperative ownership is next canvassed. Worker-owned firms have a long history. According to Wright, Marx called such strategies ‘utopian socialism’, though he was later to soften his stance towards the movement. The Mondragón experiment is cited as an iconic example of a recent such process at work, though in most cases, these undertakings comprise a small part of the national economy. But again, many of the features of the social empowerment strategy that Wright has been propagating are represented here.

Having concentrated thus far on what Wright calls ‘partial aspects’ of social empowerment, Wright now turns his attention to theories of social transformation, and he begins with John Roemer’s market socialism. Roemer identifies socialism as equal ownership of the means of production by all citizens. Thus, instead of social power, as in Wright’s formulation, this future is imagined in terms of social ownership. And instead of the state being involved, Roemer imagines the use of a stock market and decentralised control to make this arrangement work. All adults are given coupons to be used in the market, and when they die, the coupons revert to the common pool. The income generated by dividends can be used as cash in the consumer market. However, the state also plays a role in regulating this market and ensuring the rules are followed. Why is this model important? Wright argues it has two benefits – it greatly reduces the inequalities present now in the market, and it also makes markets more democratic in allowing widespread social ownership of private companies in a variety of ways. But precisely how this might occur, and what mechanisms might be needed is radically unclear, and the possibilities for the system ever to come into being

109 Ibid., page 225.
110 Ibid., page 227.
111 Ibid., pages 235 – 236.
112 See his discussion on the pages following page 247.
114 Ibid., page 248.
also seem remote.

Wright also examines a more revolutionary proposal set out by Michael Albert. Albert calls his proposal ‘Participatory Economics’ (Parecon)\(^{115}\). Albert replaces Roemer’s coupons with a more dramatic scenario. Imagine that all workplaces were owned by all citizens. No coupons or intermediaries would be needed. Second, he proposes that rather than a one-person, one-vote system that only works well in special circumstances, instead people should have power over the issues that affect them, complete power over personal decisions, shared power over decisions that affect them and others. And instead of jobs, Albert suggest the creation of what he calls ‘job complexes’. Thus each person would spend the day doing some very interesting things and some mundane, but necessary things. An example helps to clarify his proposal here:

… a brain surgeon would thus spend part of each day changing bed pans or doing other menial, tedious work in a hospital.\(^ {116}\)

Work would be rewarded according to two criteria – effort and sacrifice on the one hand, and need on the other. Participatory planning will manage the whole operation – workers and consumers’ councils will direct activities at every level of production. People make proposals and come forward with plans. Plans are then either accepted or rejected at higher levels of authority. Plans go back and forward and annual plans are finally produced. Clearly this is a direct pathway to a social economy. And indeed, this is a plan that goes, not just beyond the market, but beyond the state. This is a radical outline of a world of social empowerment. But Wright is skeptical about the possibilities of such a system ever coming into operation on a grand scale.\(^ {117}\) For Albert, though, the main problem is capitalism, and no version of market socialism, such as Roemer’s, will do. Wright cannot go with him to a position beyond markets, however.\(^ {118}\) It is important to quote Wright directly here because he comes back to regulationism as a mechanism for going forward:

I do not … think there are good grounds for this absolutist rejection of markets. Even if they are corrosive of egalitarian and democratic values it does not follow that it is impossible to impose upon markets forms of social and political regulation that would largely neutralize these corrosive effects … Once we drop the assumption that markets are like cancer – so that if you have a little in the mix then it will inevitably corrode and destroy social

\(^{115}\) Pages 252ff.
\(^{116}\) Ibid., pages 254-255.
\(^{117}\) See especially pages 261-262.
\(^{118}\) Ibid., page 262.
empowerment – then the issue of the optimal balance between participatory planning and unplanned market allocations is not one that can be decided in advance … 119

Wright then advocates four reasons why there should still be markets in the utopia of the future – first, because a little anarchy might be useful for citizens beyond the planning process120; second, markets might provide a good way for experimenting with risk-taking beyond the planning process; third, the Parecon planning process might get overwhelmed121; and, finally, do people want to spend their lives planning and meeting? If not, then the market economy may flood back into operation.122

Wright has no plausible reason for arguing for market efficiency to take up the slack when Albert’s planning falls apart, or is deficient in some way. And what is most interesting in Albert’s account is the lack of a state structure. There is, one might say a ‘Grey State’, a state that isn’t a state, but rather a national structure of participatory councils or workers’ coalitions that act like a central authority, work like a central authority, look like a central authority, and clearly have a power to decide fundamental issues of policy and practice, but which aren’t called a state. The great difference between existing states and this ‘grey state’, Albert would doubtless argue, is that this form of organization is in constant dialogue with the citizens which it seeks to help and manage. The participatory element of the dialogue is certainly different, progressive, and potentially utopian.

Wright concludes with a series of further examples of signposts towards social empowerment.123 They include community land trusts, international labour standards campaigns, university student campaigns against sweatshops, forestry conservation movements, and equal exchange and fair trade. He doesn’t draw his own conclusions here, but instead moves forward to an exposition of a theory of transformation towards social empowerment in his next chapter, which, together with the rest of the book, constitutes an extended conclusion on his previous musings.124

119 Ibid., pages 262-263.
120 This doesn’t seem like a defence of markets.
121 Again, Wright does not suggest a defence of markets, and does not indicate how the market mechanism might solve this problem. In fact, there is no mention of the market in this section.
122 Again, there is no defence of the market alternative.
123 Ibid., pages 265ff.
124 See ‘Elements of a Theory of Transformation,’ chapter eight, page 273 – 307, and the following chapters.
In ‘Elements of a Theory of Transformation’, Wright begins with the problem of resistance to radical transformation. In his view, the problem can be thought to comprise four problems. The problem of social reproduction refers to the maintenance of social structures and institutions. Any account of social transformation must account for the way in which existing systems are obdurate and resist change. Wright outlines the way in which social reproduction can take on both an active and passive form, passive in the sense that people just go along with things – with work, with family, with inequality – and active reproduction, which results from the actions of institutions to preserve the existing social order. For Wright, oppression results from the active involvement of these institutions. This reproduction results from coercion, rules, ideology and material interests. Coercion results from regulation and threats of regulation or sanctions. Rules refer to the ‘rules of the game’. This is best exemplified by the dilemma of socialist parties. Involvement in the electoral process required following the rules of the game, but to do so limited militancy and the chance to bring about radical change. Thus following the rules implies a lack of possibilities. In terms of ideology and culture, the fundamental role of the mass media is in the limelight, as well as the institutions of socialization, such as the schools and the family. Finally, material interests, the business of work in a capitalist society, is rehearsed as the fourth dimension of social reproduction. The commonly-held view, that capitalism is good for everyone, has a grain of truth in it. When economic crisis arises, such views come into question. Thus social reproduction here depends on the degree to which the population is integrated and supported by the economic system.

Wright now turns to a consideration of forms of reproduction, contrasting ‘despotic reproduction’ with ‘hegemonic reproduction’. Under despotism, coercion prevails, but under hegemony, consent is the dominant form of control. The state is more complex under conditions of hegemony than in conditions of coercion. But these systems of reproduction are always incomplete. Complexity leads to problems in itself. Wright comments:

For a whole host of familiar reasons, capitalism would destroy itself in the absence of an effective state capable of regulating various aspects of the

125 Chapter eight, page 273ff.
126 Ibid., page 174. Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction is brought to bear here. See footnote two, page 275.
127 Ibid., page 276.
128 Ibid., pages 279ff.
129 Ibid., pages 288ff.
market and production … in order for these interventions to work well the state needs to have both a degree of autonomy and an effective capacity to act … In the absence of this autonomy, parts of the state can be captured by particular groups of capitalists … (but) This autonomy and capacity … also mean that the state will have the ability to damage capital accumulation as well as facilitate it. This creates the spectre of the state undermining social reproduction …  

Thus, given the complexity of the social system, the state is sometimes unable to guarantee social reproduction, at least in a complete sense. In addition, problems arise when plans are carried out to solve problems, and they are based on inadequate knowledge, they result from struggles between various groups and not from good design, and there are unintended consequences. A third problem results from the rigidities of the system. Finally, the social structure always has unanticipated issues and this results in unpredictability.

History, for Wright, and social changes in history, result from two sources – unintended outcomes of peoples’ action, and conscious attempts directed towards social change. But to bring this change about requires a theory of change with a long time horizon. Theories of the future tend to fall into two camps – theories of rupture and theories of metamorphosis. Revolutionary Marxism is a theory of rupture. Theories of metamorphosis can be interstitial – build institutions in the cracks and crevices of the existing capitalist institutions – or symbiotic – strategies that seek to extend and deepen existing institutions. Ruptural strategies tend to depend on classes organized through political parties. Social movements focus on interstitial strategies. Here different collective actors, well beyond class, may be involved. Symbiotic strategies tend to involve coalitions, and often the labour movement. Ruptural strategies involve direct attacks on the state, interstitial strategies occur outside the state, and symbiotic strategies use the state. Each of these three strategies is then rehearsed in more detail in the three following chapters. In his conclusion, Wright argues that capitalism is now (2010) again in a situation of crisis. Capitalist triumphalism has disappeared, and uncertainty has taken its place. But some key lessons can be drawn from this history and from his analysis, he argues. Wright points to the obdurate nature of capital’s resistance to social and political justice, to its hybridity and

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130 Ibid., pages 291 – 292.
131 Ibid., page 294.
132 Ibid., page 302.
133 Ibid, page 305.
134 These schema are set out on pages 306-307.
to the alternatives. Socialism, in this view, is also a hybrid. The fundamental idea that Wright is pushing is social empowerment over the economy. Without changing the nature of economic control, then no further progress can be made. He sees multiple pathways forward, and thus socialism for him is a hybrid set of ideas, rather than a simple formula, but nonetheless a set of ideas with social empowerment at the centre of them. And if the future is socialist, it is clearly not a guaranteed future, but merely a terrain in which the struggle will take place. There is, in this view, no one way forward, and we are left instead with strategic indeterminacy.

In a later book with Robin Hahnel, Wright makes another attempt to propose an alternative future.\(^{135}\) Here Wright again proposes a ‘real utopian socialism’.\(^{136}\) The introduction points to the exhaustion of ideas on the left in the face of a continually successful and all-embracing capitalism, and the lack of any plausible ideas or visions. Into this space, the present volume appears as a much-needed alternative. Wright’s contribution reproduces the arguments first set out in *Real Utopias*. But in this setting he is in dialogue with Robin Hahnel, and with the ideas set out under Michael Albert’s ‘Parecon’ proposal in the earlier book.\(^{137}\) Wright had been dismissive of this strategy before, even while he agreed with many of the elements of Albert’s arguments. Here he finds many other sources of agreement. Among the sources of agreement are a strong commitment to egalitarianism,\(^{138}\) justice in the workplace, radical democracy, and their common critique of capitalism. But he disagrees that large-scale, and perhaps global, participatory planning could ever hope to bring about transformation. He cannot believe that this future will remove markets from the scene. Instead, Wright reiterates his previous argument – that the future is likely to consist of hybridity – various forms of social institutions that support social empowerment - and that markets will be a part of this future.\(^{139}\) He imagines a variety of markets, some of which are more acceptable than others, some of which are regulated, and some of which are not.\(^{140}\) He then engages in a detailed dialogue with Hahnel’s arguments. Among the many criticisms that Wright brings up is the issue of the state, which had seemed to me implicit in the earlier ‘Parecon’ account but never fully expressed:

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\(^{136}\) Ibid., page iii.

\(^{137}\) Though Hahnel insists on differences. See for example, his footnotes 1 and 2 on page 2.

\(^{138}\) Ibid., page 10ff.

\(^{139}\) Ibid., page 12.

\(^{140}\) See, for example, his discussion of garage sales on page 13.
There is one set of issues around public goods planning in Robin’s model that was not clear to me: the role of Government institutions rather than just consumer federations. On one interpretation of Robin’s participatory economics model, virtually all government functions are replaced by consumer councils and federations and by workers councils and federations. There might still be a role for government around certain kinds of rule-making and rule enforcing – for example, things like speed limits or enforcing the accurate reporting of pollution discharges so the planning process (however it is organized) has accurate information on which to deal with externalities. But the government would have no responsibility for planning and producing any kind of public goods.141

It is clear enough that in the ‘Parecon’ model, some form of state is powerfully at work. I called this a ‘grey state’ in an earlier formulation. Whatever one calls it, this elaborate hierarchy of planning mechanism culminates in some high-level decision-making body that, with its subordinate elements, carries out decisions, employs a staff, deploys resources, and wields power. In short, it carries out all the activities of what, in other contexts, would be called a state. If it has four legs, a tail, and it meows, one might as well call it a cat, one might reasonably argue.

In his ‘Socialism and Real Utopias’,142 Wright reiterates his argument from his previous work, but he puts the case somewhat differently here. In this exposition, he emphasises that the social in socialism is not just state control but control by society at large. Thus ‘socially owned’ means that economic resources are owned by all citizens.143 Then follows a series of diagrams that specify the differences between capitalism, statism and social ownership. Clearly, Wright is moving beyond statism, into which category Wright places much of the theorizing of the 1960s and 1970s. He implies, without precisely saying so, that those theories, whether focused on the smashing of the state or its gradual reformulation, nonetheless depended on the state for the evolution of a new society.144 He then reviews seven alternatives to existing capitalist arrangements, many of which we have met before. They include social capitalism, statist socialism, social democratic statism, associational democracy, the cooperative market economy, the solidarity economy and participatory socialism.

At the end of this discussion of political alternatives, Wright turn to consider markets – do they still have a place in the future he is proposing? Clearly the

141 Ibid., page 23.
142 Ibid., page 60ff.
143 See footnote 41, page 62.
144 See footnote 42, page 72.
strategies he is outlining allow a place for markets, regulated to one degree or
another:

I do not see market transactions as such as intrinsically undesirable. What is
undesirable (are) the ways in which markets can enable people and
organizations with specific kinds of power to gain advantages over others,
and second, the way markets, if inadequately regulated, generate all sorts of
destructive … harms on people. But if those problems are minimised
through various mechanisms, then the sheer fact of buyers and sellers of
goods and services agreeing to exchange things at a mutually agreed-upon
price is not, in and of itself, objectionable.145

This is clearly a point of separation between Hahnel and Wright because
Hahnel sees no place for markets. In complex societies, Wright suggests that
markets may provide the only solution to what he calls a ‘design problem’.146
They allow things to occur that cannot be organized in another way. Getting
to a socialist future means bringing to bear various elements of the seven
strategies he has already outlined. Thus a hybrid socialism is what he
imagines, with social power at the centre of the new forms of organization.
While the new system may still contain elements of the market and
capitalism, it is Wright’s belief that socialist ways of doing things will come to
predominate. He reminds us of his three kinds of transformation – ruptural,
interstitial and symbiotic – strategies that he has introduced in his earlier
work.

In his brief conclusion, he restates his commitment to social empowerment
as the pathway forward. Some of this movement will involve the state, and
some will not. In his last section147 Wright tries to say, as clearly as possible,
what remains of the differences between his approach and those of Hahnel.
Obviously, Wright finds a place for markets in his future and Hahnel does
not. In the end, while Hahnel sees markets as cancer-forming, damaging the
structure of society and all those involved with them, Wright prefers the
metaphor of ‘carcinogenic agent’. In other words, in the Wright view,
markets have a propensity towards harm, but this propensity can be managed
with proper treatment.148 Wright continues to insist that markets can solve
some problems that cannot be solved easily in other ways - ‘convenience’ is
the term he uses to define this problem.149 Markets also allow risk-taking and
the necessary trade-offs required for democracy to work effectively. In his

145 Ibid., page 82.
146 Ibid., page 83.
147 See ‘Finals Thoughts’, page 115ff.
148 Ibid., page 116.
149 Ibid., page 119.
hybrid society, he has room for the possibility of what he calls ‘marketish processes’\textsuperscript{150} since, unlike Hahnel, he does not believe that the future can be entirely and unambiguously predicted. And Wright does not believe that Hahnel’s reliance on mathematical modelling is valuable. Finally, Wright disputes the need for a final ‘rupture’ with the system, believing that such an approach may not be useful in developing an emancipatory alternative. Thus, Wright concludes, a variety of pathways forward is our best chance of moving towards social emancipation and social empowerment. But a rupture within the present society is long into the future:

I suspect that the time horizon before the issue of attempting a systemic rupture with capitalism in developed capitalist countries is very far in the future, and that it is even further in the future before the issue of whether or not markets should be abolished will be on the political agenda of any democratic society. But I also doubt that one’s beliefs now about what should be decided under those future conditions would greatly affect any choices about strategies and initiatives today. It is in this sense that I think the main thing is to be very clear about fundamental values and the critique of capitalism, about the possibility of realizing those values to a much greater extent in alternative economic institutions, and about the practical initiatives we can undertake today that move us in that direction.\textsuperscript{151}

Wright wants to offer some hope that, if indeed, major transformations are well over the horizon, then there is much to be done in the meantime to ameliorate our present dilemmas. Wright’s hybridity and his acceptance of markets under proper control enables us to see a series of ways in which, given the present circumstances, progress can be made. Indeed, with his use of a variety of examples, he is able to show that many elements of the society he hopes for already exist, even if they exist in disparate contexts, scattered throughout the world. None the less, these examples serve the purpose of taking the utopian visions into the ‘actually existing world’, and thus offer a counter-argument to the most obvious critics of utopian thinking, who dismissively call such work unrealistic and empty.

Wright does sustain a role for the state, but this time as an enabling system which will allow social ownership, rather than as an anchor for all the socialist hopes for the future. This theory of the state is partial and incomplete, and cannot compare to the extraordinarily rich accounts offered by the theorists of the 1970s and 1980s, who he now assign to the slagheap of history. This is because he resolutely rejects state socialism, or any version of it, as the centerpiece of the new society. On the other hand, he reserves,

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., page 123.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., page 130.
and stoutly defends, the role of markets in this new world of his, and, along with his wide variety of new elements, sees, instead of a simple map to socialism, a more complex, partial, somewhat less hopeful, and more ambiguous, future. This is the socialism of Post-Fordism, rather than the Fordist socialism of the past. There is no longer one future to be dreamed of, if there ever was. Instead of certainty, Wright offers ambiguity.

Perhaps Wright’s account of markets constitutes a form of fatalism. Markets are ubiquitous, and they seem to function well, even if they are implicitly unequal and unjust. But it does not seem so. Wright seems convinced that markets are useful in a more positive sense and not just mechanisms to be avoided. I would argue that instead of using the logic of the market, one could speak of the same thing in different ways, using, for example, the language of exchange. Exchanges are inevitable and often useful. They may take the form of gift exchanges, or exchanges between people in a garage sale, where both are happy with the price, or exchanges on Craig’s list or E-bay, where people set a price and seek a seller. Exchanges of this kind, and many others that take place in their millions each day, are valuable, tolerably democratic and usually equal. They are also immensely useful, as Wright requires of his market mechanisms. Why not use this language, rather than the language of the market, which is redolent with a long history of corruption, inequality, exploitation and injustice? The problem with Wright’s use of the language of the market is that he cannot escape the semiology that surrounds the use of the term.

The state, then, in Wright’s final account, is a bit player in the socialist future he anticipates. There is much to admire in Wright’s account. The optimism, the careful analytic work, the willingness to struggle at length and with great effort on the most intractable problems facing society at large, and progressive people in particular, are all valuable contributions to the political work of the future. The state, long imagined to be the central actor in all this, now comes to play a minor role, drawn onto the stage in a bit part as a shareholder when necessary, but removed from the commanding roles of director and producer in whatever form of society we can muster up in the future.
3. Bourdieu: ‘We are the State’

Biography

Pierre Bourdieu’s biography at first glance takes on the shape of a predictable cliché. Born in 1930 in a small, rural village in the Pyrénées in southwest France to a father who was a sharecropper, and later the postman, he was sent to Paris early on to study at the prestigious École normale supérieure. This much is part of the rags-to-riches, poor-boy-made-good, story of coming-of-age novels everywhere. He went on to become, by several measures, the most influential social scientist of the 20th century, the most highly cited, and the most revolutionary thinker, both in empirical sociology, but also in the related fields of the theory, philosophy and the epistemology of the social. He shifted the way sociology did its work for many people. But while the superficial recounting of his biography suggests it was well planned, a more careful reading will show that Bourdieu’s life was anything but straightforward. Richard Nice comments:

I think there are two versions of Bourdieu’s past. One is the mythical one in which he is the peasant boy confronting urban civilization, and the other one, which he actually thought through more seriously is what it’s like to be a petit bourgeois and a success story. And all this obsession with other people’s language, and with the use of language to dominate and put down in rational and non-rational ways is perhaps the rethinking of his own experience.

Bourdieu was conscripted to fight in the Algerian War, an experience that profoundly shaped his early work, and his own social understandings. He soon returned to France, and continued his political and intellectual life at full speed. He returned under the patronage of Raymond Aron, who initially appointed him a teaching assistant at the Sorbonne. In 1964 he became the

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152 With Cheleen Mahar and Richard Harker, I edited a book in English on Bourdieu, and during 1987, worked as an associate research director at the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme in Paris under Bourdieu’s patronage. While widely considered a fierce academic combatant, he was also very generous to junior researchers, as he was in this case.


154 Richard Nice translated some of Bourdieu’s major works into English.

co-director, with Aron, of a new research unit, the ‘Center for Historical Sociology’,\textsuperscript{156} as well as a director of studies at the École des haute études en science sociales. His sponsors included three academic and institutional heavyweights – Aron himself, as well as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Ferdinand Braudel.

Bourdieu initially busied himself on a series of tasks that were immediately to separate him from Aron’s vividly liberal position. With his insistence on the primacy of social class as a source of social explanation, he established a political difference with his mentor that could not easily be bridged. Like many of this era, he became vigorously engaged in a debate with Marx, but not through the usual channels of Marxist existentialism, or through membership of the Socialist or Communist parties, around which many intellectuals focused their attention.\textsuperscript{157} From the start, Bourdieu sought to employ what he termed ‘rigorous scientific work’ to the service of political life, eschewing the brilliant, but what Bourdieu considered, the deeply superficial work of writers such as Roland Barthes, work he described as mere essayism, fashionable, certainly, insightful perhaps, but in the end lacking rigour or any lasting value. Bourdieu was always engaged in several projects at once, but perhaps most significant at this point were his twin activities in art and education – both were deeply infused with the flavour of social class. In The Love of Art and in Photography,\textsuperscript{158} written during the mid-sixties, Bourdieu and his colleagues were able to show how social classifications, economic difference and cultural knowledge permeate, diffuse and come to characterise both the production and the consumption of art. At the same time, Bourdieu was undertaking his seminal work on education that was to extend his reputation far beyond French borders. In 1964 Bourdieu and Passeran published The Inheritors\textsuperscript{159} which:

... advanced stinging criticism of the class-based character of the French

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\textsuperscript{156} Further details on the relation between Aron and Bourdieu are to be found in David Swartz’s account (Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. University of Chicago Press, 1997), pages 22-25.

\textsuperscript{157} From the Guardian of 2002, we read: ‘It became common practice for officials of the French Socialist party to talk of la gauche bourdieusienne, their enemies on the left’. (Guardian, Douglas Johnson, January 28)


university population and of student culture.\textsuperscript{160}

This ‘removal of the veil’ previously concealing the class origins of the gloriously republican and putatively egalitarian French educational system was revelatory and revolutionary. It was also, clearly enough, profoundly political.\textsuperscript{161} But it was the May 1968 events that were further to sharpen the political differences between Bourdieu and others. Like most French intellectuals, he didn’t foresee the rise of the students resistance movement, but unlike many of them, he was at odds with it. Not until much later did Bourdieu fully express himself on this issue:

Bourdieu’s early silence regarding the events of May 1968 is conspicuous, for the French student movement received special attention from all the other leading French sociologists of the time. Only when secure in the highest and most prestigious academic position in French academe at the Collège de France did Bourdieu publish, in \textit{Homo Academicus}, his interpretation of May 1968 … Bourdieu remain(ed) skeptical of the real significance of the French May 1968 experience … he describe(d) it as only a “symbolic revolution” or “collective trauma” that, while contributing to the re-emergence of cultural conservatism in the academy, has been “without political consequences” or any genuine transformation.\textsuperscript{162}

\textbf{Taking the State Seriously}

Bourdieu had been writing politically from the moment he brought pen to paper in the 1950s, but during this later period, Bourdieu had been writing ever more seriously in a political direction – the emphasis on social class saw to that – but he had not directly and in detail examined the role of the state in one concentrated place, though he made many references to it over many years.\textsuperscript{163} In any event, he rectified this situation completely in 1989 when he

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{160} Swartz, op. cit., page 24.
\bibitem{161} A series of further books and writings on education followed, including, particularly, \textit{La Reproduction ; Eléments pour une théorie du système d’enseignement} (also with Passeron) published in French in 1970, by Les Éditions de Minuit.
\bibitem{162} Swartz, op. cit., page 25. Swartz cites an article by Bourdieu and Haacke as the source of these later ideas. (P. Bourdieu and H. Haacke (1994) \textit{Libre-Echange}, Paris, Éditions du Seuil.)
\bibitem{163} One could hardly ignore, among many other examples, \textit{La Noblesse d’état : grands écoles and esprit de corps}, (Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1989) though this text concentrates primarily on the education and background of those who enter the state structure, rather than comprising a fully-fledged account of the state, which is more fully provided by the Collège lectures.
\end{thebibliography}
embarked on three years of lectures on the topic between 1989 and 1992. The 1989 introduction presents a typical example of Bourdieu’s extraordinarily convoluted and, simultaneously, brilliantly incisive writing. He requires us to think again about the state because the state has already told us how to think about it:

… the further I advance in my work on the state, the more convinced I am that, if we have a particular difficulty in thinking this object, it is because it is – and I weigh my words – almost unthinkable. If it is so easy to say easy things about this object, that is precisely because we are in a certain sense penetrated by the very thing we have to study.

And in another typical Bourdieu phrase in the very first paragraph, equally designed to cause confusion, he comments that ‘agents (of the state) have an interest in disinterestedness’. That is, the agents of the state have a social role to represent the nation, society at large, the national interest, while simultaneously concealing their own interest in power, status or whatever else might be operating. Thus, in a characteristic move towards reflexivity, Bourdieu begins his account by requiring the audience to think of the state anew.

Bourdieu then reviews existing state theory – theories of the state as a neutral site, theories from the Marxist tradition, from Marx, to Gramsci, to Althusser and beyond, to which he is opposed. No-one who reads Bourdieu carefully can imagine he is not in close and routine dialogue with Marx, but this is no easy discipleship – the orthodoxy of the socialist and communist literature is nowhere to be found. Indeed, Bourdieu sees an orthodoxy in neo-Marxist scholarship he seeks to avoid. In his view, theories that suggest dominance of the ruling class, as well as the serving of the interests of agents of the state themselves, can be called functionalist, and the Althusserians and the Parsonians tell us nothing when they tell us what the state can do. Instead, the state for Bourdieu is a ‘well-founded illusion’, closer to a religious belief than a mere instrument of bureaucracy. Bourdieu then shows his hand more clearly by setting out his argument to come:

I would say that the state is the name that we give to the hidden, invisible principles … of the social order, and at the same time, of both physical and

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165 On the State, op. cit., page 3.
166 On the State, op. cit., page 3.
167 Ibid.
symbolic domination, likewise of physical and symbolic violence.\textsuperscript{168}

The fact that we have a public time, a time when we get up for work, and a time when we go to bed, more or less agreed upon, and acted upon in large numbers, assumes we have swallowed this ordering of the world into our bodies, into our mental structures:

People are quantified and coded by the state: they have a state identity. The functions of the state clearly include the production of legitimate social identity; in other words, even if we do not agree with these identities, we have to put up with them ... The state is this well-founded illusion, this place that exists because people believe it exists ... By the way of preamble, therefore, what I want to say is: be careful, all sentences that have the state as subject are theological sentences – which does not mean they are false, inasmuch as the state is a theological entity, that is, an entity that exists by way of belief.\textsuperscript{169}

This assertion of the state as a theological, a religious entity, turns on its head much of what has been written about the state to this point. It places the state in our mental structures, first and foremost, a view that few had taken seriously. As school inspectors inspect schools they embody the idea of the state. The state makes statements; the inspector judges and pronounces. Teachers, working for the state, judge students, provide insults and encouragement in equal measure. When teachers say these things in a state school, it has the force of the state behind it. It is the judgement of the social writ large. It is the authorized account.\textsuperscript{170} These forms of acts are expressions of symbolic authority. Thus, we must think of the state in a new way:

The state ... is not a bloc, it is a field. The administrative field, as a particular site in the field of power, is a field, that is, a space structured according to oppositions linked to specific forms of capital with different interests.\textsuperscript{171}

Bourdieu has now introduced his field theory, which implies that we already know something about his central notions of capital, habitus, sites of struggle, strategy and social classes. It is sufficient to know, for the moment, that Bourdieu is proposing the state as a social space in which interests compete for various valued goods, (capitals) and in which strategy and struggle play a part. In his next lecture,\textsuperscript{172} Bourdieu comments on what he takes to be the parlous condition of state theory:

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., page 7.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., page 10.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., page 11.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., page 20.
\textsuperscript{172} Lecture of 25 January 1990.
I think that if the theory of the state, in the ramshackle state it is in today – at least to my mind – can keep going, this is because it floats in a world that is independent from reality. Theorists can discuss ad infinitum, whether they are from Marxist or neo-functionalist traditions, precisely because the connection with the things of the real world, of everyday life, is not made.\textsuperscript{173}

Bourdieu continues his attempt to remedy the situation by considering the question of government commissions, royal or otherwise, that undertake work, first, historically, for the King, and then later, as an instrument of government, that investigates matters of prime importance. A public problem is legitimated and given the weight of the state to establish its authority. Commissions depend on a form of alchemy, the alchemy of the state, which is called upon each time the commission meet. The commission changes particular individual events into universal principles, and draws on the resources of the state to make it so.\textsuperscript{174} Spinoza’s notion of the \textit{obsequium} is useful in explaining how this system of authority works. It refers to respect that individuals may have, not to other individuals, but to the social order, and particularly the symbolic order.\textsuperscript{175} This acceptance of the social order, which Bourdieu claims resides in every one of us, explains, in part, the basis on which the state’s power resides. Thus members of a commission must be people who are ‘respectable’, who, in their individual lives, command authority from a majority of the population; they must be people who know the rules of the game. The official truth generated by such commissions, or by such slogans as Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité, which is ensconced over the doorway of every French town hall, hardly provides the template for the activities of all agents of the state, or of society, but it does resonate in people’s minds. As Bourdieu puts it:

(\textit{This official truth}) exists both in a certain type of structure – in the social ministries, for example, there are objective principles of equalization, a claim to equalize – but also in people’s minds, as the representation of something that one might well say does not exist, but that people agree would be better if it did.\textsuperscript{176}

The effect of the state is thus to establish a condition of obsequium towards

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., pages 24-25.
\textsuperscript{174} There is hesitation in Bourdieu’s presentation, reflecting Bourdieu’s unease about the way the presentation was going. A paragraph expresses these fears openly, but he tells the audience that he will continue in spite of these anxieties and uncertainties. This suggests that Wacquant’s comment about his timidity is not without foundation. (Wacquant, op. cit.) This discussion of the ‘problem of the audience’ continues throughout the lectures, and is never overcome.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., page 34.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., page 35.
things that might not exist, but which, in many minds, should be brought into being. Instead of an opposition between the state and civil society, which had often been proposed, it might be more useful to talk about a continuum between the two which expresses the degree to which public resources, whether material or symbolic, are available. Bourdieu is overturning many of the distinctions that left theorists have taken for granted till this point, the distinction between state and civil society being an obvious example. Bourdieu’s attempt here is clearly not to say that the state is a merely a myth, but to reinvent what he sees before him – to argue that the state exists, clearly, but in a very different form than is normally taken to be true, and not just by the general public, but by the theoretical community who are concerned with state theorizing as well.

In the lecture of February 1, 1990, Bourdieu reviews his last lecture material, aiming for clarity. But beyond this, he now consciously seeks the origins of the state. And he starts by trying to identify, in his early work on the Algerian Kabyle, who spoke, first of all, for the people. In traditional societies, these were sages and prophets, sometimes the poet. He uses the obscure term ‘prosopopoeia’ to refer to someone speaking on behalf of an abstract idea, such as wisdom, or a nation. For example, De Gaulle would speak on behalf of France, as if he imagined himself to be the embodiment of the nation, which, of course, he did. Why is the genesis of the state important, Bourdieu asks—because the things that later become invisible and obscured are still available to see at this early stage. The prophet catches the group he speaks for in a trap because he captures the collective ideal. In the Kabyle the amusnum speaks of the honour of the group and the highest value of the people, and this is why, Bourdieu tells us, losing face is of prime importance. Thus:

The official … is the public. It is the idea that the group has of itself, and the idea that it wants to give of itself, the representation (in the sense of mental image but also of theatrical performance) that it wants to give of itself when it presents itself as a group.

The original source of the meaning of the word ‘public’ lies in the distinction between the individual, the private, the unique, on the one hand, and the collective, on the other. ‘Public’ also refers to the visible, to the openly said. The theatrical metaphor is useful because we can describe the public as

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177 Ibid., page 36.
178 Ibid., page 46.
179 A sage or a bard in Kabyle society. Italics in the original.
180 Ibid., page 48.
taking place on stage and not behind the scenes. The official thus must become an agent of universalization and moralization.\textsuperscript{181} Following Goffman, Bourdieu speaks of the formal attitude of waiters, who, when they come through the swing door of the kitchen, assume the public role of the representative of the restaurant, the embodiment of dignity and honour, while behind the scenes, gossip about the customers, back-biting, nail-biting, smoking and all the private habits take place.

The origins of the state are connected to three kinds of people, \textit{first} of all, with the wise men, the prophets, the \textit{amusnaw}. \textit{Second}, they derive from the work of jurists, lawyers, who, as Bourdieu says, create the early state:

\begin{quote}
The state is a legal fiction produced by lawyers who produced themselves as lawyers by producing the state.\textsuperscript{182}
\end{quote}

Then, there are also a \textit{third} category, jurists who are close to being prophets, and here he is thinking of English canon lawyers of the twelfth century who were the first to put forward the idea of the state.\textsuperscript{183} They are jurists who Bourdieu describes as ‘still close to the \textit{amusnaw}'.\textsuperscript{184} By this he means people who still question in whose name they speak. Later this all dissolves when the state emerges in its fully fashioned form, because it is clear who one is speaking for – the juridical system, the courts, the government, the Minister of Justice, and so on. In the early days, this understanding is still in the process of construction. These early beginning reveal things that are still present in the legal system, but which have now become invisible. They have become invisible because a field of juridical practice has emerged into which jurists are now dissolved, and the origins of this field have now become obscured. This invisibility is connected with polysemy, the various forms of meaning and discourse that are associated with judicial work. Jurists and their precursors needed to learn to speak on several levels to suit the audience. Secrets are hidden in some settings, revealed in others. The naming of issues is a first step to dealing with, making legal, authorising, and perhaps, ameliorating social issues.\textsuperscript{185} The prophet thus names what the group or, even less, the individual, cannot name. Thus:

\begin{quote}
What transforms singular discourse into common and sacred discourse, into common sense, into discourse capable of receiving the consent of the totality of individuals and thus generating consensus, is rhetorical alchemy, the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., page 50.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., page 55.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., page 56.
\textsuperscript{184} Pages 56-57.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., pages 59-60.
alchemy of the oracle.\textsuperscript{186}

Bourdieu continues with an assessment of alternative theories of the origin of the state that he had promised earlier, but from which he had digressed to try to clarify an earlier argument. Bourdieu starts by imagining a situation of linguistic anarchy prior to the origin of the state in which anyone could say anything and no rules of legitimacy apply. The state’s purpose is to ‘concentrate linguistic capital’\textsuperscript{187} and to bring order to anarchy. What Bourdieu calls ‘this utopia of anarchy’\textsuperscript{188} is imagined by Kafka’s \textit{The Trial}. Kafka raises, again and again, the question of the authority of the lawyer, but this kind of thinking cannot continue indefinitely. In the end, this has to stop and the place it stops is the state. So what kind of research should we do on the state? Bourdieu goes on to elaborate such a strategy, but this is hardly straightforward in his view, and he must first clear away a lot of underbrush and rubbish before this can be revealed. Economic arguments are clearly one-dimensional and inadequate. Much of Marxist theory might lie in this direction. Then he interrogates Shmuel Eisenstadt’s \textit{The Political Systems of Empires}\textsuperscript{189} as a possible model. His hope here is to give him a positive reading, and to introduce him to a French audience. Eisenstadt’s comparative approach allows him to draw out patterns in the rise of nation-states, to provide typologies, and shows the rise of state to be a qualitative shift in history.\textsuperscript{190} He then considers Perry Anderson’s \textit{Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism} and \textit{Lineages of the Absolutist State},\textsuperscript{191} as a possible pathway forward, but knowing, as we do, that Anderson sits at the centre of the Marxist intellectual project, one is not hopeful that this review will turn out well. Bourdieu starts by telling us that Anderson’s basic question is ‘completely naïve’, and things do not get better from there. Indeed Bourdieu seems so furious with Anderson that he moves away from the topic almost immediately, and while the section was planned to be a review, it rapidly becomes an avoidance. To sum up, Bourdieu notes:

I had intended to compare Eisenstadt and Perry Anderson in order to show you how, beneath the apparent opposition between a structural-functionalist tradition and a Marxist tradition, there are many resemblances. To sum up very quickly: Eisenstadt is functionalism for everyone, whereas Anderson is

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., page 61.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., page 67.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., page 77.
functionalism for certain people. Eisenstadt asks what the functions of the state are for the totality of the social order, all classes together, whereas Anderson examines the class functions for the dominant of that time, that is, the feudalists. But the essential thing is that they are both functionalists. Instead of asking what the state does ... they deduce what it does from the functions they posit almost a priori, such as the function of maintaining unity, serving etc.192

Having dismissed these two authors with a rapid barrage of anti-functionalist criticism, Bourdieu then turns his attention to Barrington Moore and his theory of the three routes that lead to capitalism, fascism and democracy.193 Barrington Moore intends to follow the landed upper classes and the peasants into revolutions as they move towards these three possible futures. Bourdieu finds him ‘the most consistent comparativist’.194 Bourdieu briefly rehearses Moore’s argument, focusing on the relationships between the large, landed propertied interests, the peasants and the urban bourgeoisie. Thus the three end points result from different combinations of these three interests. A balance results in democracy. Domination by feudal interests results in some form of dictatorship.

Bourdieu now summarises where his argument has led him195:

I recalled that the agents of the state are characterised by the fact that they are invested with functions that are called official, that is, with official access to official speech, the speech that is current for official instances and the state. You could say that the state is ultimately the place where official speech, regulations, rules, order, mandate and appointment is current. In this logic, the state is characterised by being the site of a universally recognized power, recognized even when challenged ...196

Bourdieu now turns to a topic he has been threatening to cover for some pages – the genesis of the state. He plans to do this under two headings – first to show what is necessary in order to produce such a history, and then to indicate what is novel about his approach. So, what is involved in providing a history of the state? Providing a detailed logic of state formation seems difficult, and perhaps impossible, as Anderson and Eisenstadt have shown in what Bourdieu has already, directly (in the case of Anderson) and

192 Ibid., page 81.
194 Ibid., page 82.
195 ‘This reflecting, repeating, summarising strategy is strongly at work throughout this series of lectures.
196 Ibid., page 84.
indirectly (in the case of Eisenstadt) argued to be a false hope. France and Britain are to be his case studies, since they provided the model for state formation in many other nations. Marx made similar assumptions, using England as the classic case of capitalist development. Marc Bloc uses these two nations as archetypes. Bourdieu then briefly sets out his theory of genetic structuralism. As sociologists, our job is to study the origins of structures, both individual and social. It is easier to do the job when one is clear about the methods and the nature of the craft involved, Bourdieu argues, and this is what he is sorting out in these pages – elements of a method. Thus his genetic structuralism is to be separated from traditional history by being explicit about method, by examining the logic of historical change, and by analysing social fields. Bourdieu then invokes his field theory, his arguments about games, capitals, struggles and strategies. He does this by way of an example – the game of chess. Fields are locations in social space where actors compete for capitals (valued goods) according to a set of rules, which are both durable and changeable as a result of the actions of agents. As they engage in these struggles, agents develop strategies for success. To describe the genesis of a field, therefore, is to describe the origins of a game, a game of deadly seriousness. Then, in typical Bourdieu fashion, he peppers his presentation with comments that take the reader’s breath away. For example:

> The state has been a great protector of ignorance, in the sense that it can serve as the repository for everything that people are unable to explain in the social world, and it has been endowed with every possible function …

Bourdieu is exhorting us not to assign a logic to the state that does not exist. The state cannot explain everything, but that is the role that some historians have appropriated to it. Structures are durable but they are not unchanging. Social agents are not merely bearers of this social structures – Bourdieu is warning us against Althusserian structuralism, and invoking instead a world in which structures and agents engage in a constant dialectic within fields of struggle. Bourdieu then warns us further against the error of anachronism, the belief held among some historians that things are much the same as they

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197 Bourdieu used this term in discussions during 1986 when, with Cheleen Mahar, we were writing the edited book on his work. We preferred the term generative structuralism for reasons we describe in some detail elsewhere. Needless to say, Bourdieu was unmoved by our amateur proposals.

198 Ibid., page 93.

199 See page 94 for details of this example. Since Bourdieu’s general theory is widely known, I have not repeated it here, though this example will provide an introduction if needed.

200 Bourdieu, page 95.
were in the 16th century – that a very similar character to De Gaulle, for example, existed in 1546. The rules of the game have changed and these parallels will not hold. Bourdieu then ends his lecture by examining ‘the two faces of the state’. Does this approach to the origins of the state add anything, ask Bourdieu? :

The state is a Janus about which it is impossible to state a positive property without simultaneously stating a negative property, a Hegelian property without a Marxist property, a progressive property without a regressive and oppressive property. This is troubling for people who like to think that everything will turn out rosy ... 

Describing the origins of the state is to describe the origins of a social field, the field of legitimate politics :

To give the genesis of the state is to give the genesis of the field, in which politics is played out, symbolized, dramatized in prescribed forms, and by the same token the people with the privilege of entering the game have the privilege of appropriating for themselves a particular resource that we can call the ‘universal’ resource.

This emerging field is the field of the universal, the realm of the public good, yet, at the same time, the establishment of privilege and the concentration of resources is also taking place. Privilege comes with the rise of the universal. Thus legitimate culture is that culture that the state authorises. Diversity is now replaced by uniformity. The creation of national standards requires the dissolution of local ways of doing things. This process gives rise to a caste of state managers – the state’s nobility, who Bourdieu calls the ‘monopolizers’ of the universal.

The lectures we have just discussed constitutes the presentations offered during 1990. In 1991 in January, some eleven months later, Bourdieu returned to his subject for a further nine lectures. At the start of the new

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201 Ibid., pages 97-101.
202 Ibid., page 98.
203 Ibid.
204 Ibid., page 100.
205 ‘These lectures were offered on the following dates during 1990 : 18 January ; 25 January ; 1 February ; 8 February ; and 15 February. Nine lectures were offered during 1991, stretching from the 10th. of January to March 14th., and given each week, presumably at the same time and place, at the Collège. There appears to be a gap between the lecture of 21st. February and the lecture of March 7th. A lecture might have been anticipated on February 28th., so this might have been a holiday or some other break in the régime of presentations.'
year, he warns the audience that he plans now to follow two themes – the
genesis of the state, an old topic, as well as focusing on the structure and
functioning of the state.

The state, Bourdieu begins on 10 January 1991, is an impossible topic. It
condemns the sociologist to modesty.\textsuperscript{206} Thus he feels it is necessary to set
out the challenges that make the task of state analysis impossible, but also
essential, at one and the same time. He reminds us of his genetic structuralist
approach lest we have forgotten what it means, the last lecture being almost a
year ago. To do this work, the sociologist must liberate themselves from pre-
existing categories of thought, or risk the burden of being constrained by
what is already known. The problem is that we all know the state – the state
is within us, and we have opinions about it:

When I fill in a bureaucratic form, which is a great state invention, when I fill
in a request or sign a sickness certificate … when I do operations of this
kind, I understand the state perfectly: I am, in a sense, a man of the state, the
state-made man, and by the same token I understand nothing about it.\textsuperscript{207}

He proposes using the example of spelling to illustrate the point further, but
first he veers off into another territory. To do the kind of work he is planning
to do, one must break with common sense, both in the scientific world and
in the world of the ordinary. He cites the rise of state theorists (Poulantzas
and others) in the sixties as a resurgence in a long-neglected field, and he
mentions the reaction to this work in the writings of Theda Skocpol and
others. Then Bourdieu veers, somewhat alarmingly, into another new area
concerned with housing policy, citing earlier work he had undertaken, then,
in another lurch, he examines network analysis.\textsuperscript{208} Here Bourdieu sides clearly
with the structuralists against the simply interactional theorists. Then he is off
again in another direction, and we are hanging to his coat-tails – now he uses
the example of the reform of the teaching system,\textsuperscript{209} and then a mention of
an international crisis, before returning to an examination of schools. Thus :

There is a specific logic of the state, and these constraints, regularities,
interests, this logic of operation of the bureaucratic field, may be the origin of
a dependence or independence in relation to external interests …\textsuperscript{210}

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., page 105.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., page 108.
\textsuperscript{208} Pages 110-111 for the housing policy, and pages 111-112 for coverage of network
analysis.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., page 112.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., page 113.
The point Bourdieu is making is that whatever the state does, it serves some interests more than others, and usually the dominant, rather than the dominated. This is, of course, a theory of domination writ large, in every syllable and every sentence. So, says our author, we must break with grand theories, break with common sense, remain aware of what we are doing, and especially our epistemological assumptions. Bourdieu then lets us into his strategies for escaping these problems. Given that the state shapes our thinking, a genetic structuralist approach, opening up the origins of the state through this line of reasoning, allows us to see through it. This permits us to bear witness to a moment when the state was questioned, and the very notion of state control lay in the balance. The problem with the state is that it very soon becomes doxic – it becomes part of the natural order of things, the only way to think, and so on. But history cannot be seen as a linear business. There’s no going backwards, that’s for sure, but at any given moment, there are a series of possibilities going forward. ‘History destroys possibilities’, says Bourdieu. Similarly, the state says ‘that’s the way it is’, cutting off alternatives, and arguing instead that what exists is the only possible state of affairs.

Bourdieu finally returns to spelling, a topic he had mentioned early on, and from which he had veered away. Spelling, according to Bourdieu, has filled more column inches recently (1991) in Le Figaro than the Gulf War. This somewhat odd occurrence has captured his attention. Spelling is tied closely to the ‘right way to write’, to the logic of the state and to the social ordering of things. Thus to raise the question of spelling also raises the larger question of the authorized language, and the defence of the culture in general. It is a site of difference and hierarchy. Those who can spell well, who ‘get it right’ establish themselves in a certain location in the hierarchy, just as those who defend Latin do so because their knowledge of Latin identifies them as

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211 What counts for truth, how we constitute good knowledge, and so on – a philosophy and methodology of sociology in this instance. Bourdieu then offers another impassioned aside about the difficulties of teaching at the Collège, a problem I witnessed when seeing him speak in 1987. The audience was extremely diverse – there were street people coming in out of the cold and huddling around radiators, paying little attention to the talk at all. There were earnest young students taking detailed notes. There were world-weary academics, intellectually advanced housewives, bored bureaucrats – a wide mixture of people whom it was hard to target. Bourdieu starts by talking about classrooms where eighteen year olds used to sit next to six year olds, but then focuses on his own immediate problems.

212 Ibid., page 116.

213 Bourdieu’s phrase, page 117.

214 Pages 119-121.
especially educated people over and above others. Thus, Bourdieu concludes:

The genesis of the state … is the genesis of space within which … a mode of symbolic expression is imposed in a monopolistic fashion: you have to speak in the correct manner, and in this manner alone. The unification of the linguistic market, the unification of the market in writing that is coextensive with the state, is made by the state as it makes itself. One of the ways in which the state makes itself is by making a standardized spelling …

To establish the genesis of the state, one must interrogate two sets of facts – on the one hand, the vast historical terrain which one must encounter, and on the other hand, theories of the state. Bourdieu begins with an analysis of theories of state genesis, and the work of Norbert Elias. He takes Elias to be developing a neo-Weberian theory. In The Civilizing Process Elias explores the rise of the state as the exercising of power over a territory by the monopoly over the use of physical violence. Elias is original and useful in providing his account of how the private power of the king becomes the public power of the state, but there is little discussion of the symbolic. Two processes are at work in the rise of the state, according to the Elias theory. The first is the ‘gradual concentration of instruments of violence’, along with the capacity to tax in the hands of a particular ruler or administration. This process is similar to the rise of a monopoly in a market. Monopolization may come about at the end of a series of battles for domination. But the rise of the state may also mean the beginning of a peaceful era, in which old battles for control are now at an end. It leads to a balance between the king and his subjects. This gives rise to a complication:

The holder of power becomes increasingly dependent on his dependants, who become increasingly numerous.

The power of the state starts in the hands of a small number of people, and passes through the central figure of the king. But as the state develops, a larger number of people are involved in the emerging process of state power. A strategic field of the political starts to develop – the beginnings of a bureaucracy.

Bourdieu now examines Charles Tilly’s arguments about the origins of the

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215 Ibid., page 120.
216 Ibid., page 127ff.
218 Bourdieu’s phrase, page 128.
219 Ibid., page 129-130.
220 Ibid., page 130.
Tilly’s reasoning goes beyond that of Elias in that he seeks to account for more states, and to examine common features and differences between states. But, like Elias, he ignores the symbolic dimensions of domination. Tilly does show the uniqueness of the French and English cases, rather than assuming these cases to be typical. Bourdieu then rehearses a series of questions raised by Tilly. Europe seems to form a series of concentric circles, with weak states at the periphery, strong states at the centre. Why is this so? Why do states treat cities in different ways? And, third, why does power vary among city-state and empires? The answers lie in the rise of physical and economic force. Towns accumulate economic capital; states accumulate physical force. Tilly then proposes a series of stages that economic concentration goes through. In the first stage, monarchs extract rent from feudal structures. Then the states draw on capitalists who lend to them. Finally, a taxation system is put into place. At the same time a concentration of coercive forces is occurring. First, monarchs raise armies through servants and those who have obligations to the king. Then mercenaries step forward to fill the role. Finally, armies are absorbed into the state. By the 19th century, these two processes – taxation and coercion – were both embedded in the state. Thus you can develop a theory of three stages – first a phase of what Bourdieu calls ‘patrimonialism’ based on feudalism; then a phase of ‘brokerage’ involved with service for money; and finally, a period of specialization within the state. This is not a pattern that happens evenly or at the same time in different states. Thus, Bourdieu concludes, three pathways lead to the rise of the state – the rise of the coercive trajectory (Russia); the capitalist trajectory (Venice) and the mixed trajectory (England) where the state, formed early on, mixed with a large commercial city.

Bourdieu then takes up arguments posed by Corrigan and Sayer as to whether the state functions well for all because it imposes order and brings stability. Bourdieu argues that their approach is quite different from the strategy followed by Tilly and Elias. In contrast to the others, they do not accept the state as an agent of coercion, and as a reflection of economic power, a view Gramsci also distanced himself from. Bourdieu quotes them in the following way:

Marxist theories forget ‘the meaning of state activities, forms, routines and rituals – for the constitution and regulation of social identities, ultimately our

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222 Ibid., page 133.
subjectivities’.

Here Bourdieu appears to have found two sympathetic fellow-travellers who understand the significance of the symbolic role of the state. As in Bourdieu’s own arguments, they claim the state as a codifier and a classifier, and argue that, through this kind of work, the state ‘imposes a legitimate view on the social world’. Corrigan and Sayer leave aside considerations of physical violence and economic capital – what they focus their attention on, instead, is the cultural revolution of the state. In Bourdieu’s take, this approach:

... (privileges) ... an explicitly Durkheimian perspective (in) what they call the ‘moral dimension of state activity’; they describe the construction of the state as the construction ... of a set of common representations and values.

They follow Gramsci as seeing the state as ‘domesticating the dominated’. This raises the issue of what the welfare state is up to – does it provide service, or does it instead function as a method of control, and, of course, it does both. Thus the state establishes what might be called a nation and a national identity. They are thus able to say what it means to be English:

... ‘the supposed reasonableness, moderation, pragmatism, hostility to ideology, “muddling through”, quirkiness, eccentricity, and so on’.

What Bourdieu takes Corrigan and Sayer to mean is that the state is a system of rituals. This emerging nationalism saved England, according to this view, from revolutionary change, because it was clear what was at stake – the widely-held belief in the nation as a well-established and distinct entity worthy of protection from its subjects. Bourdieu finds their argument confused, and he sets out to clarify the English situation. Is the English case typical? Bourdieu starts by citing the French case in comparison as an example of universalism of an extreme form with a highly centralised state. Can the same be said of England? Second, Bourdieu believes that without the conceptual tools available from his repertoire – symbolic capital, symbolic violence – Corrigan and Sayer cannot make sense of what is going on. They cannot explain, in particular, the voluntary submission of persons to

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224 Ibid., page 142.
225 Ibid.
226 Bourdieu’s phrase.
227 Ibid., page 143.
228 Ibid., page 144.
the will of the state. The state does this by wielding what Bourdieu calls ‘symbolic power’. Corrigan and Sayer argue that what is unique about the English case is the persistence of a series of ‘anachronisms’ that do not remain in other societies, which allowed the bourgeois revolution to succeed. The irrational, non-bureaucratic style of the state allowed the English to go forward into capitalism with few constraints. The state remained ill-formed until the 19th century, and appointments were often patronage-based. As well, the monarchy remained at the centre of government. They thus challenge Marx’s depiction of the French Revolution as the ‘measure of all revolutions’. Bourdieu will go further in what follows. He proposes to argue that the French Revolution is a false revolution, in which continuities are as important as changes, and which then generated a series of false questions about revolution around the world.

In his fourth lecture in 1991 on the state, Bourdieu reminds us of the Corrigan/Sayer arguments. Corrigan and Sayer suggest that the archaic state structures in England were no obstacle to the rise of capitalism, and indeed may have allowed more freedom to the emerging economic form, and this may be true also of Japan. This argument is directly at odds with Weberian notions of rationality, and the need for new capitalism to have an efficient state to depend upon. This is doxic thinking in sociology, and it is to Corrigan’s and Sayer’s credit that they break with this line of thinking. Thus, it is not rationality and law that hold society together; it is culture. These forces of cultural cohesion held English society together even as the forces of capitalism came flooding into the picture.

The same issue arises among Japanese Marxists as it did among English Marxists – why no revolution here? Feudalism still remained, and the absolute monarchy still persisted. The economic system still relied on an ancient system of land tax even in the modern universe. Finally, the Meiji restoration was supported, not by the urban bourgeoisie, as should have happened according to certain well-established theories, but by the samurai class. Bourdieu takes the view that the Meiji Revolution was a conservative revolution, by which he means a movement that sought to restore older forms of society. It was led by ‘petty samurai’ who sought larger power and better economic conditions, all this under the guise of a request for universal rights.

229 Ibid., page 148.
230 Ibid.
232 Ibid., page 152.
233 Ibid., page 154.
For many centuries, and perhaps from as early as the eighth century onwards, Japan was a bureaucratized state with all the characteristics of the state – the use of writing, bureaucratic division of labour, state actions by functionaries and other familiar qualities.\(^{234}\) The samurai, displaced and discarded, affected a transformation to become a class of intellectuals and bureaucrats. Thus to explain the ‘Japanese Miracle’, one must start with these understandings of the highly bureaucratised and early established state, just like England. In France, cultural capital very quickly became a path to power, and the same process occurred in Japan. People were thus bound up with the state. Educational and cultural capital are thus closely bound to the economic elements of the ‘Japanese Miracle’. And:

English culture was … constructed against the French model. ‘Englishness’ was defined against France; each of the adjectives that are constitutive of ‘Englishness’ can be set against an adjective characterizing ‘Frenchness’. Japanese culture is a cultural artefact constructed against the foreign with the intention of rehabilitation. Japan was a nation dominated but not colonized. It experienced subjection to European domination without for all that being directly subject to this domination, as was China. Because of this, Japanese culture was inspired by the intention of rehabilitation, of ‘dignification’ in the face of the contempt of Westerners.\(^{235}\)

Cultural orthodoxy was sustained through two mechanisms – the school and the state. But then schools often play this role in a variety of countries. In the case of the French, through an imperialist mechanism, the claim was made for the construction of a universal culture that was of value to the world entire. This imperialist claim, familiar also in English examples, is now made globally on behalf of the United States. Thus culture always has within it elements of domination and nationalism,\(^{236}\) offering a legitimacy to the social order as it is. There are thus forms of domination that are very gentle, and not coercive in the physical sense at all. Consider mathematics – a science that is abstract and far removed from politics. And yet it is at the heart of technology and capitalist progress. It offers:

\[\text{…a perfect domination, being the domination of reason, and an implacable domination, as there is nothing to oppose reason with except reason itself, or a still more reasonable reason.}^{237}\]

\(^{234}\) These qualities are set out on page 155.
\(^{235}\) Ibid., pages 156 - 157.
\(^{236}\) Ibid., page 160.
\(^{237}\) Ibid., page 161.
Thus, as well as brutality, physical violence and physical force, there are also forms of symbolic domination that are perfectly decent and reasonable. This means that the old models based on ideas of infrastructure and superstructure, of physical violence and coercion alone, will no longer work. We will need to look elsewhere for a more satisfactory theory of the state and its origins.

What, then, are the theoretical problems raised by Corrigan and Sayer’s book? Bourdieu starts by using a ‘little-known’ argument from Hume, who wonders at the ease by which people allow themselves to be governed. Hume argues that force and opinion are the only things behind such a condition, and thus, implicitly, that justice, reason and fair play are nothing to do with it. For Bourdieu, the ‘symbolic dimension’ will play a major part in the explanation. Bourdieu tries to answer Hume’s question directly – how is that order is so easily managed? He reminds us of the theoretical apparatus that he has already assembled – symbolic power, symbolic capital, symbolic violence – they are sitting in the wings ready to be brought onto the stage. For Bourdieu, relations of symbolic power are no different from relations of physical power – there is no antagonism between the two. Those who submit know they are submitting. Their act of submission is also an act of cognition, an act of recognizing their acceptance of domination:

To understand acts of obedience, therefore, you have to conceive social agents not as particles in a physical space … but as particles who think their superiors or subordinates with mental and cognitive structures … I believe that in order to understand this almost magical power that the state holds, you have to examine cognitive structures and the contribution the state makes to their production.

Here Bourdieu seems to ascribe to the state almost mythical powers that create ‘structuring structures that are applicable to all the things of the world, and in particular to social things’. Most interesting to Bourdieu is what he calls ‘the belief effect’, the fact that most people stop at a stop sign, even if a policeman is nowhere to be found. The state thus produces a state of social order without resorting to coercion, except as a last resort. In this view, the symbolic comes first. It is the accumulation of symbolic capital that precedes any material or coercive forces that might be applied to an individual. The state forms a moral and a logical conformity, largely through the work of the school system. Part of this process involves a series of rituals, often taking

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239 Ibid., page 164.
240 Ibid., page 165.
the form of examinations and certifications, that separate out those who pass
them from those who don’t. Thus the school is a place, not just of
certification, but also of consecration and of the establishment of difference.
One cannot read these passages without the thought coming to mind that
Bourdieu is ascribing to the state a ubiquitous power that other parts of his
argument, the part that ascribes agency to individuals and groups, would
reject. He is bending the stick too far in the other direction.

But for the moment Bourdieu continues down his integrationist path, arguing
that the state brings together not just timetables, but also time itself,
established on a national level, rather than being localized, as well as
schedules, calendars, syllabuses, examinations, certifications, legal structures
and so on. More than this, the state also frames mental structures and forms
of cognition. Paradoxically for Bourdieu, this is precisely what Marxists
cannot explain even if they talk about it the whole time, and this is because
the theoretical apparatus does not exist in their schema to take on the task.241

In his lecture of 14 February 1991, Bourdieu starts with a long aside on the
difficulties of teaching sociology, and of being a sociologist,242 and it is only
after several pages of self-analysis that he returns to his topic. But he finds
his rhythm again towards the end when he starts to chart new territory again,
and to bring together some findings that have been only implicitly rendered
until now:

The state is the product of the gradual accumulation of different kinds of
capital – economic, physical force, symbolic, cultural or informational …243

The task for the sociologist is to characterise the qualities of these capitals,
their balance and their form, in different social conditions and historical
ePOCHS. And this question is attached to another - how do the private capitals
of individual lives come to be part of the public capital of the state?244

241 Ibid., page 169.
242 Pages 176 ff. One senses, as before in this series of lectures, the profound
frustration Bourdieu felt in trying to communicate the substance of his arguments to
such disparate audiences. He comments: ‘I felt more than uneasy after the last
lecture’. (Page 182)
243 Ibid., page 186.
244 Ibid. This is another attempt by Bourdieu to reformulate the problem, as if he is
continually reshaping his argument as he works. While this is entirely in keeping with
his profoundly reflexive approach to sociology, one also understands that this endless
process of revision makes his intellectual task doubly difficult, as if there were not
enough challenges in the work itself. My sense is that he had no doubts about his
Bourdieu acknowledges his focus is on the emergence of the state in the West, and accepts he cannot avoid ideological criticism for not spreading his net wider. In Strayer’s argument, while it can be claimed that there are similarities between the early Chinese state and the later emerging states of Europe, those who established European states were completely ignorant of this history, and thus could not be accused of borrowing from existing patterns of government elsewhere. Strayer goes further to suggest that the early European states were very different when they emerged from anything to be found in ancient Greece or in the Asiatic model. These early empires were largely military operations, but they did not involve the citizenry much in their day-to-day operations. Thus, everyday life under imperial rule at the margins of the Empire was often little affected by battles and power struggles elsewhere at the core of the Empire. The emergence of the city-state changes everything. Here, in these small societies, citizens are very closely integrated, and loyalty is very strong. But Bourdieu doesn’t believe we can transfer these understandings simply into the modern world. For him, these states were very different from our own, because our notions of patriotism stem from a schooling system that did not exist in these earlier periods. Strayer argues that the virtues of these small societies were combined with the territorial range of Empires to form modern European states. But what needs to be added to Strayer’s account, Bourdieu concludes, is an analysis of symbolic capital. And it is to the question of symbolic capital that Bourdieu turns in his next lecture. As we have already heard, even the most violent physical act is associated with symbolic violence as well. Thus, Bourdieu wants to claim:

… there is no physical effect in the human world that is not accompanied by a symbolic effect. The strange logic of human actions means that brute force is never only brute force: it exerts a form of seduction, persuasion, which bears on the fact that it manages to obtain a certain form of recognition.

But this extension beyond violence towards the symbolic is equally true of other forms of capital, such as economic capital. Wealth is never simply wealth, since it carries with it a rich semiological baggage of status, power and influence. And it is clear that cultural capital and social capital are, by their very nature, deeply symbolic from the start. Nobility is a pure form of

thesis or his capacity to carry out the work, but that he had enduring worries about the audience, and the possibility of his being fully understood.


246 Bourdieu, page 188. Deviations, paths not taken, and cul-de-sacs continue to attract Bourdieu’s attention in his next lecture of 21 February 1991.

symbolic capital. The term originates from a sense of being recognized, being notable.

As the state develops, it takes on various tasks. This occurs in four stages, the first being an attempt to concentrate various forms of capital, which means to universalise, among other things, symbolic capital.248 The second stage involves the structuring of the dynastic state, in which state property is personal property. This results in an analysis of family wars. In the third stage, which he calls the movement ‘from the king’s house to raison d’état’, there is a move from a family-based state to a bureaucratic structure. The final stage involves the movement from the bureaucratic state to the welfare state.

Bourdieu then turns his attention to the dynastic state.249 We may, in this process, he argues, be guilty of using contemporary terms to describe historical conditions which require different forms of analysis. The major bond holding these states together was usually the loyalty subjects had to the leader - a king or a prince. What forms of concentration took place during this period? Bourdieu suggests that military, economic and symbolic power were all being brought together in this emerging structure. There is also a meta-capital at work in the new régime - the capacity to create capital itself. The developing state provides itself with the power to preside over all forms of capital. Thus the state might be best considered as:

… a field within which agents struggle to possess a capital that gives power over other fields.250

Military power and taxation are clearly elements of this early form of state. To create a military force for the state also requires private forces to come under the control of the state, or to disarm. Thus all forms of concentration involve a process of dispossession and separation, whether this be physical capital, cultural capital, social capital or symbolic capital. Physical force is required for two discrete purposes – to establish the authority of the state to do what it needs to do internally, such as raise taxes and keep order, as well as to defend the national territory against external enemies.

The second question to consider is taxation. The emergence of a tax system is a prominent element in the formation of economic capital at the centre, though clearly land held by the King also plays a prominent part. And there

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248 This theory of the stages in the process of concentration on pages 193ff.
249 Page 195. He says that he will ‘begin at the beginning’, but in fact, in the stages he has just set out, this is stage two.
250 Ibid., page 197
are also other powers available; the right to coin money, to set exchange rates, to establish a central bank, all new mechanisms by which to concentrate wealth within the state. As Polanyi and others have shown, the state did not come into being by accident, but was, in part, a result of mercantilist needs for an economic space to inhabit. The forming of a taxation system was part of this process of construction. Taxation at this stage becomes universal, and not merely a feudal arrangement in which funds are exchanged between people who know each other. Once you accept the obligation of taxation, you also accept membership in the state’s community. The usefulness of physical violence to gather taxation and to carry out the state’s functioning is only made possible by the presence of symbolic capital — the value of the things that the state is doing. Thus if taxation supports a war against an enemy, the symbolic capital at work lies in the valuing of protecting the national borders. But all this has to happen in an important theatrical sense as well — the grandeur of the court, the presence of livery worn by bailiffs, in the world of ceremony, of the pomp and circumstance of Kings, all developed in order to create forms of symbolic capital that will allow the system to legitimate and sustain itself. Belief in the king is paramount, even if the agents of the King sometimes act unjustly.251

Bourdieu now has two lectures left in the year, and he continues his discussion of taxation. Corrigan and Sayer remind us that resistance to taxation was widespread, overcome in part by the use of liveries among bailiffs to represent the king, acting in his name, and thus legitimate in the eyes of the citizenry, who valued their loyalty to the crown. Corruption was common, and the suspicion routinely arose that the state lackeys who gathered the taxes did not transmit all these funds to the king. The legitimacy of the state depended, then, on the degree to which the King could be called upon as the court of last resort, as well as on the emergence of national chauvinism, the need to secure boundaries.252 Bourdieu now considers the rise of the juridical market. During the 12th century in Europe a series of juridical structures emerged to dispense justice, some deriving from the church, others from commerce, or from towns and cities, yet more from the seigneurial system of landowning and peasantry. Bourdieu traces the way in which these disparate courts came together to create an unitary system. Haphazardly, unevenly and slowly, royal justice came to supersede other forms of justice. There is in this process the genesis of a logic that has no logic.253 The juridical system started to develop its own system of rules, while

251 Ibid., page 204.
252 Ibid., page 209.
253 Ibid., page 210. Bourdieu is citing Marc Bloch’s work here.
the royal monopoly began to take over from the great landlords. What is at stake here is the establishment of a single game:

Concentration should not be imagined as simply a process of capital accumulation, a game of marbles in which they all end up in the king’s possession … Where there were several games … there is now a single game, with the result that all players are summoned to locate themselves in this space of play, and occupy a certain position within it.\(^{254}\)

This case study suggests a more general trend, which is an interest in the universal, and the formation of institutions designed to capture the universal. At the same time, the concentration of cultural capital is also developing. The cultural market becomes unitary. The rise of a national cultural capital market cannot be separated from the rise of a national symbolic capital market. There must be hierarchies, ranks, ‘great men’. The state takes over the cultural patronage market from private individuals,\(^{255}\) and thus begins to take an interest in the national cultural economy. In 1661, Louis XIV arrested Nicolas Fouquet, ‘the last of the great patrons’, and immediately moved to take over the artists that he had been supporting.\(^{256}\) In short:

The state therefore concentrates culture, and the idea of the unification of mental structures should be borne in mind here, the fact that the state appropriates mental structures, producing a unified cultural habitus whose genesis it controls …\(^{257}\)

The law, a dimension of symbolic capital, thus concentrates symbolic capital itself. The state becomes ‘the central bank of symbolic capital.’\(^{258}\) All forms of social consecration come to fall within its ambit. While once the nobility were appointed ‘by nature’, by God, by tradition, once the king gained national dominion, noble rank could only be established by the royal court. In 1666 Louis XIV created a census of nobles, thus enabling him to judge and to rank nobles. A diffuse symbolic capital, localised, private and uncertain, is thus replaced by a unitary system, with coats of arms, hierarchies, genealogies. The state decides who can wear what, and thus determines the conditions and the outward manifestations of the symbolic market. The king has become:

… ‘the fountain of honours, of office and of privilege’. In other words, he

\(^{254}\) Ibid., page 210.

\(^{255}\) Bourdieu welcomes this trend, page 216.

\(^{256}\) Ibid.

\(^{257}\) Ibid.

\(^{258}\) Bourdieu’s phrase, page 217.
was the unique source of symbolic power.\textsuperscript{259}

Symbolic power thus concentrates in the king, but then spreads out into society, creating a network of symbolic systems that, in turn, together constitute the field of the symbolic market.

In his last lecture of this series,\textsuperscript{260} Bourdieu first turns to a ‘digression’, when he speaks of a programme on television seen the previous night featuring Bernard-Henri Lévy.\textsuperscript{261} He soon returns, however, to his theme, conscious that this is the last lecture of the academic year.\textsuperscript{262} The two-faced nature of the state preoccupies him here – the state as integrationist and unificatory, while simultaneously the instrument of monopolization and domination. Thus the rise of the cultural market is also the rise of cultural domination. He plans, in the new year, to trace the shift from the ‘personal state to the impersonal (or partly impersonal) state’.\textsuperscript{263} The state constructs itself as the source of the greatest capital of all, the holder of a meta-capital, the capacity to dominate all the fields of capitals, to decided what is of value and what is not, and to reign over the entire system of fields. But unification also has a cost. It also implies ‘de-particularization’, the loss of local difference and distinction.

The rise of the state also implies control over territory. The rise of the state replaces control of space by tribes, by groups, by communities, by control of a wider territory by a central authority. In Algeria, this meant the French colonial state took over the management of territorial and social space from the centre, replacing centuries of tribal rule. This results from a dramatic shift in the system of domination. Thus the state ‘unifies and universalizes’.\textsuperscript{264} It does this in the field of symbolic goods just as it does in all the major forms of capital at work in the world. Education is the primary mechanism by which this happens. But this unification also leads to the destruction of local markets, as in the case of Bourdieu’s famous study of Béarnese farmers, who


\textsuperscript{260} Lecture of 14 March 1991.

\textsuperscript{261} Lévy was one of the leading ‘New Philosophers’ who attacked the totalitarian views of communist intellectuals during the late 1970’s, and called for the end to master narratives from the left. He became a media personality, journalist and social commentator of wide repute. Bourdieu’s critique is harsh and deeply disparaging.

\textsuperscript{262} He returned to the topic in the new academic year, in October 1991.

\textsuperscript{263} Ibid., page 222.

\textsuperscript{264} Ibid., page 225.
could no longer find wives because new, better educated potential husbands were coming in to the community from outside the village, and providing marriage opportunities from the wider market that had not existed before.265 Provincial accents become stigmatized: Paris becomes the standard by which all are judged.

All this can be seen as a religious process. Weber saw that the rise of the clergy offered them a sanctified role, while banishing the laity to the world of the profane.266 Similarly, with the rise of the state, teachers can be seen to be consecrated by the state as sacred individuals blessed with cultural capital, while the laity, the students, come to be consecrated through the process of education. But, on the dark side, what this means also is that those who are not so consecrated, those who fail, those who do not gain certificates, diplomas, qualifications, degrees, are relegated to perpetual profanity, to the world of the dispossessed, a story teachers cannot easily hear. Thus the state produces nationalisms, but it also produces resistance, and anti-nationalisms, those who resist the state and wish to fight back.

We come now to consider the last series of lectures Bourdieu was to undertake on his theory of the state.267 In his first lecture, he traces the shift from the personal power of the king to the impersonal power of the state. He begins by attempting to explain the logic of the dynastic state surrounding the person of the king. At the heart of this account is Bourdieu’s notion of ‘reproduction strategies’.268 In order to understand the reproduction of ‘the king’s house’, one has first to come to grips with notions of system and strategies. The strategies involved include fertility and family planning, and questions of succession, which directly impinge on the problem of property division. Strategies must also focus on education of the heir, a process which provides the cultural foundation for the king’s symbolic capital to be accumulated. Curiously, as Bourdieu had already argued elsewhere, heirs often are not ready for inheritance.269 The new king must be readied to inherit the crown. Economic strategies must now be followed in order to

265 Bourdieu rehearses the elements of his study on pages 227-228.
266 Ibid., page 229ff.
267 The lectures took place on the following dates: the 3rd, 10th, and the 24th of October; the 7th, the 14th, 21st, and 28th of November; and December 5th and 12th. The lectures are listed as 1991-1992, referring to the academic, and not the calendar, year.
268 Bourdieu, pages 237-244.
269 The reference here is to Bourdieu’s study of Flaubert, found in ‘The invention of the artist’s life’, in Yale French Studies, 73 (1987), pages 75-103, and to The Rules of Art, Cambridge, Polity, 1996.
secure land and investments of other kinds. There must also be strategies conserving social capital, the networks of family and friends that is usually ascribed to women, even in advanced societies. Finally, Bourdieu introduces us to a word of his own invention - sociodicy.\footnote{Leibniz used the term ‘theodicy’ to refer to the justification of God. Bourdieu uses his new term to denote the justification of society.} What he means by this is that part of the strategy for reproduction must include a justification of the world as it is. Thus we infer from his overly brief treatment that the ‘king in waiting’ must be inculcated with a profound belief in the justice and inevitability of the royal purpose if reproduction of the royal house is to occur successfully. All such strategies are part of a single intention – to assure the reproduction of a social system, in this case, the royal house. Once the king’s house is established and secured, it soon becomes apparent that the political world is part of the family world – the two are merged, one embedded in the other. The state and the royal become one and the same thing.

In his next lecture,\footnote{Lecture of October 10, 1991.} Bourdieu plans to show us how the system of domination developed between the dual logics surrounding the king and the state. A nation is far more than a monarch’s intentions, quite clearly. Instead Bourdieu wants us to consider the house as a ‘house thought’, that is, to understand the logic and the interests of the royal household. The house becomes a reality beyond individuals which has a logic to it – patrimony, territory, power, money – that all become part of the logic of the house. What distinguishes the king from other citizens is his divine quality, and thus he has a unique symbolic capital. But he can also play the feudal game, and battle for resources with the best of them. The king is thus the centre of the social system, and this aids in the process of the concentration of capitals. It is then possible to understand why the concentration of capitals occurred around the king, independent of his will – the king did not simply think the process into being, or make it happen through an act of private volition.\footnote{Ibid., page 254.}

The reason to study the genesis of the state is to uncover the deep logic of the political system. Thus, we must understand that it was necessary to break with ‘house thought’ to start to develop a wider political logic, a logic of the state, that goes beyond the king’s household. Therefore we need to examine the very long process by which ‘house thought’ becomes ‘raison d’état’, the national interest. This process required the emergence of a new field. And the rules of this game are at odds with the existing game and its rules. To begin
with, there is something in the logic of the royal house that has an ‘affinity’\textsuperscript{273} with the logic of the state. Belonging to the house means belonging to the logic of the house. But this logic contains within in a set of contradictions that must be overcome. These private powers are shifted, through the actions of jurists, to a condition whereby these private powers become public. At the same time, the lawyers and the jurists act as ideologists for the king.\textsuperscript{274}

The second condition to be overcome is that the king must try and find a system of reproduction of the family household which is in contradiction to the logic of the emerging world, a world of education. As early as the 12\textsuperscript{th}. century in France, according to Bourdieu, state clerks were emerging who could point to their competence as a new source of authority – they could do things. Thus while the king had ownership, they could manage; they could run the trains on time.\textsuperscript{275} Thus, there are those whose position rested on the dynastic principle, and those whose authority rested on competence and merit. Holders of dynastic power had, from the very start, to depend on experts to retain their power. They required military experts, financial experts, resource strategists, and political operatives. They required, in short, a primitive and very limited, form of bureaucracy. Thus:

You see that the state is built up against nature, that the state is \textit{antipysis}\textsuperscript{276}: no reproduction, no biological heredity and no transmission, not even of land, whereas the king and his family are on the side of blood, land and nature.\textsuperscript{277}

Thus the rise of the logic of the state is associated with the dismissal, the delegitimation, of succession. The means of production cannot be passed down by a law of nature, and with it, the guarantee of social status. At the same time, hereditary offices are disbanded. Thus what is at stake here is the contradiction between two modes of production.\textsuperscript{278} But in typical Bourdieu fashion, this is no mode of production that we have ever met before. He wants to claim that the best way to understand the French Revolution\textsuperscript{279} is to understand it as ‘the triumph of the mode of impersonal reproduction over

\textsuperscript{273} Ibid., page 257, Bourdieu’s word.
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid., page 259.
\textsuperscript{275} Ibid., page 259.
\textsuperscript{276} Contrary to nature, italics in the original.
\textsuperscript{277} Ibid., page 262.
\textsuperscript{278} There is a Marxist turn of phrase being employed here, and in the previous lecture, the use of the term ideology, again from the Marxist lexicon, that Bourdieu rarely employed. Indeed in the next lecture, he castigates those who use the term. (See page 269)
\textsuperscript{279} Bourdieu’s apartment in Paris stood very close to the original site of the Bastille.
that of personal reproduction’. Thus the logic of the family is placed against the logic of cultural and educational competence of the state. The system is still riven today with these contradictions, between heirs and newcomers. The period of transition between these two modes of production is very long, from the 12th century to the French Revolution in the case of France. The systems are very hostile one to another:

And you can say that in a certain sense the state nobility – the nobility of competence embodied in the noblesse de robe – expels the old nobility.

There was no simple transition from one mode to the other – indeed, the entire process is very complex and extended, and a mixed condition exists for a very long period of time. Nonetheless, the logic of the model still holds. The charismatic nature of the traditional hierarchy comes from God, blood, nature and the land, and it comes up against an emerging charismatic system, that of the gifted individual, endowed by ‘nature’ through some magical process, with qualities that are ineffable and inexplicable. Jurists were at the heart of this shift, those who carried the universalist claims forward. Jurists played a central role in establishing the state. Thus those bound up with the law came to confront those concerned with blood and heredity. In this struggle between the two logics, the king may call on the emerging state logic as an argument against his brothers who fight for dynastic control. A key question must be – whose interests are furthered by the emergence of the new logic of the state? People have interests, and not just simple economic interests, but instead very complex interests that require to be understood. For example, Bourdieu argues, receiving a salary from the state also involves a feeling of belonging, and this feeling of belonging, identity, is an interest of importance. At the same time, because of its particular powers, the state distributes symbolic capital. The king may have been the ‘fountain of all honours’, thus expressing his position as the most concentrated site of capital formation and accumulation, but doing this also confirmed on him a meta-capital – the capacity to decide which capitals count and which do not – a magical power. In the new logic, the state takes over this power.

As the state emerges, the king devolves power. Thus emerges a system of

\[280\] Bourdieu, pages 264-265.

\[281\] Ibid., page 266.

\[282\] A phrase from Blackstone that Bourdieu has used before, referenced here again on page 273.

\[283\] In the U.K., the Queen still nominally holds this power as the ‘fountain of honours’, even though the government has largely usurped those capacities in practice.
networks and linkages that can lead to corruption at every level. And the process of state concentration has its limits—Bourdieu calls this problem the ‘logic of compromise’. Corruption is thus structural, and the state must find ways to counteract this corruption.

In his next lecture, Bourdieu again voices his disquiet about not being properly understood, before turning to the case of corruption in China. In traditional societies, it may be possible for the king to control the whole social system in more or less complete form. But as political systems become elaborated and extended over wider areas of territory, this is no longer possible. Filial piety could be an obvious source of corruption, and thus early Chinese bureaucrats sought to propose obedience to the Emperor as a higher social good than filial piety. But this strategy did not solve the problem of corruption, but rather enhanced it, because it was easier to exploit strangers than family members. Salaries are a recent invention. But in the Chinese case a ‘flow of illicit funds … irrigates the whole system from bottom to top’. And, in the present French system, under neoliberalism, a system of corruption still remains, with high officials being paid large bonuses which are never revealed, never open to public scrutiny, never accessible:

Here again there is institutionalized corruption, state privilege. And this institutionalized corruption is the work of those who denounce the corruption of intermediaries.

Bourdieu writes of a famous mandarin, Li Zhi, who wrote a book called *A Book to Burn* which examined mandarin corruption. He was, of course, reviled, and later committed suicide. Such a political system could not tolerate this kind of commentary. Bureaucracy and bureaucrats, for Bourdieu, are always placed in a position of ambiguity because of institutional corruption. Bourdieu had written earlier about trade union delegates, who are forced both to speak for themselves and for those they represent, a kind of ‘double game’. There is a way in which many people engage in acts of bad faith—

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284 Ibid., page 275.
285 See footnote 393.
286 Ibid., page 282.
287 Ibid.
288 Ibid., page 285.
290 Ibid., page 286. This certainly seems an ambiguity, but is it necessarily a corruption? For Bourdieu it is, because it suggests that such delegates actually express their own views as if they were the views of the people they represent. This process
lying to oneself – as in the case of American lawyers who, while they act venally in their day-to-day practice, still adhere to a rhetoric of fair play, justice and decency to legitimate their work. Bureaucrats continually have choices, even if the logic of the office seems to suggest rationality, order and logic. They have choices about whether or not to act on a request, whether to act slowly or quickly, whether to ignore a demand or act immediately, whether to give a request a positive or a negative judgement, and so on.

Bourdieu ends his lecture by turning to the theme of ‘the invention of the public’. First, the extension of the circuits of independence involves differentiation and inter-linked structures. Second, while differentiation is occurring, a sense of the collective work must also be accomplished simultaneously, which involves the constitution of the public. Third, the constitution of the public brought into being a series of conflicts that started to emerge among agents established by the new logics. The logic of the familial comes to be replaced by something that is, at first, ill-defined. Three processes are involved: the replacement of primary family allegiance by formal allegiance; second, replacing family succession by reproduction based on the school system; third, replacing rulers by a process of ‘central nomination’. Each of these processes can easily be observed.

The genesis of this public power preoccupies Bourdieu in his lecture of 14 November 1991. In this process, both a public and a national reality come into being. His aim, he claims, for the last two years, has been to explain how the French Republic (RF) came to emerge. He begins by analysing the emergence of the republic. The process of universalisation was also accompanied by a new form of privatisation, in this case by the state nobility. Bourdieu asks early on:

Are the bearers of nationalism not frequently those who have a private interest in the appropriation of the public?

The rise of the public is first examined by an assessment of English constitutional law. In this case, the power, initially in the hands of the king, was gradually divided, a process from which a bureaucracy slowly developed. Maitland, the English constitutional historian, examined the rise of what he called ‘the great officers of state’. These locations were previously in the

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of personification (prosopopoeia is the term Bourdieu uses) happens everywhere, ‘l’État c’est moi’ being only the first in a long line of examples.

291 Ibid., page 290.
293 Ibid., page 293.
king’s house – the steward, the butler, the chamberlain, and so on. These same activities extended by a slow process over the national territory. Thus these proud officers who held ‘great positions’ could be said to be holding offices that were once entirely domestic, and which, of course, were servile positions. Some of these offices soon became hereditary, and at this point they apparently became unimportant, show offices of ‘exhibition and ceremony’,294 relegated to the universe of symbolism. Bourdieu argues that even today in France such figures take up diplomatic positions or they present TV shows – they thus retain their symbolic, ‘showy’ functions. And, of course, to say that symbolism amounts to nothing is an error of grave proportions, in his view.

Alongside these honorary nobles there emerges a new class of office-holders appointed to do the real work of the honorary office. These new positions are legally warranted and sanctioned, subject to the law and ordained with legal powers. As this process develops, a new legal structure emerges simultaneously. Dynastic logic and indeterminacy are closely intertwined. But when precision, definition and explication come into being, the game changes. The king himself starts to become enveloped in a legal structure that shapes his field of action. Actions required must now be accompanied by some royal sign – the royal seal usually fulfils this role. Words are not enough anymore – written orders must be provided under the seal, the signature, counter-signed by an official.

The seal for Bourdieu becomes a ‘magical imprint that condenses the whole state reality’.295 ‘The question then arises – where does the magic come from? Bourdieu thinks he has found an answer in Mauss and his ‘Essay on magic’.296 Mauss argues that the effectiveness of the magician results from the world in which he operates, and the audience who allow him the possibility that magic does exist, and that he can perform it. In the same way, the state and its seal perform a similar function, a function which depends on the audience allowing that magic has occurred, and sustaining a belief in the seal, in the degree certificate, in the whole process of symbolic power. But the one power does not easily overcome the other. Instead what emerges for many years, and perhaps to this day, is a merged system that combines elements of both the dynastic state and the bureaucratic state.

294 Bourdieu’s phrase, page 295.
295 Ibid., page 297.
Bourdieu now examines how royal seals are used. Originally, the parliaments only had powers designated by the king – instrumentalism was at work. The royal will had long been presented in the form of acts, charters, warrants, letters patent and other instruments bearing the royal seal. The chancellor initially had control of the seal. The chancellor was the first minister and the secretary of state for all departments. But because of the many duties of the chancellor, a general seal was soon replaced by the private seal of the king. Very soon, new seals appeared, representing other forms of office. A keeper of the privy seal was then appointed. This keeper then required a secretary, and this new office became the secretary of state. There is, in all this, a political ontology that suggests a ‘great chain of being’ that starts with God and the king, and runs down through the high office-holders, through the chain of command, and down finally to the mere mortals that constitute the citizenry. The seal simply represents the process by which this authority is distributed. Documents are signed, first by the king, then by the king’s secretary, next by the keeper of the privy seal, and finally by the chancellor who places the great seal of the kingdom. In the end, the seals must provide a legal pathway to the king, and this suits him very well, since all power appears to originate with him. This process necessitates a hierarchical division of labour. Thus emerges a complex system of mutual guarantees. Bourdieu says:

What I am describing is the genesis of a universe, the genesis of a division of labour of domination.

But as the system develops, and more people and more positions are added to this complex web of domination, the king, once in a position to control by himself, is now, in turn, controlled more and more by those who apparently serve him. A ‘depersonalization of power’ now takes place in which, while the king may still remain the ‘fountain of all honours’, the new power can only be achieved by the slow withering away of kingly authority, and this is the very moment of the birth of the state, and of the very idea of the public.

In the medieval period, as Cassirer has shown, a period emerged when the distinction between science and alchemy was unclear, and in the same way, with regard to the state, two forms of reasoning were in operation and an overarching logic remained uncertain and in flux. There is thus no linear

297 Bourdieu’s phrase, page 299.
298 This is clearly a falsehood, but a useful one for the king’s purposes.
299 Ibid., page 302.
300 Ibid., page 302.
301 The reference is to Cassirer, Ernst, and Mario Domandi. 2010. The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
process at work, but instead a series of comings and goings, reversals and moves forward. The outcome of all these processes is the rise of what Bourdieu describes, very significantly, as the ‘meta-field of power’, the capacity by the state to determine what counts as capital and what does not, to control all the fields of capital. Thus:

The general thesis on the genesis of the modern state … could be presented as follows: you have the progressive constitution of a differentiated space, an ensemble of fields – juridical field, administrative field, intellectual field, political field … and each of these fields is the site of [specific] struggles … These fields are thus in competition with one another, and it was by and large in this competition that the state was invented, a kind of ‘meta-field’…

This is the most succinct, and at the same time, the most abstract account Bourdieu has provided to date of the genesis of the modern state – as the arena in which all capitals are decided, the state acting as a sort of referee over all the fields of struggle, though clearly not a referee that is capable of deciding everything in some autocratic fashion. The rise of this power in the wake of the emerging fields of struggle is especially compelling and original.

Bourdieu now turns to a research agenda on the French Revolution, an agenda which he would take up if he had more time, and perhaps several lifetimes. The analysis would follow Bourdieu’s now-familiar field theory, outlining rules, capitals, strategies, struggles and habitus in each field of activity. This would, in his view, greatly help in explaining the various Republican ideas that emerged at the state’s infancy. But Bourdieu passes up this opportunity, and turns instead to some Anglo-Saxon treatments of this process – not without an aside about intellectual nationalisms and their associated prejudices – and especially to Sarah Hanley’s *Lit de Justice of the Kings of France.* Here Bourdieu finds a detailed analysis of the relation between the French ‘Parlement’ and the king. The process of delegation of power to the justices – which meant Parlement – is carefully set out. The *Lit de Justice* was a special session of the Parlement during which the king sat upon a throne and during which the compulsory registration of royal edicts took place. Thus it was the precise moment at which Parlement did not exist – the king took this power away simply by being there and usurping parliamentary authority. He obliged parliament to submit to him. Hanley’s

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302 Ibid., pages 310-311.
304 The French Ancien Régime spelling of the term.
book details the struggles over this process, a struggle that put at stake, at every moment, whether the King’s will would be obeyed, or whether parliament would over-rule him. This was clearly a struggle in the balance of forces within the political field as this field itself was being constituted. As the king faced crises, as in the case of François 1, he sought help from his administrators, and thus ceded power to the emerging state.

Bourdieu is clearly excited by Hanley’s book, and particularly by the way in which she studies not just the political theories of the time, but the rituals of the moment. She is thus able to examine the display of authority, of hierarchy, of social structure, and, simultaneously, the use of symbolic power through the use of a particular discourse, the seating of people on higher and lower cushions, the battle for rhetorical profits, and the emergence of a juridical structure. Thus juridical struggles become struggles for the symbolic power of the state. These were the first attempts to create a public. In these struggles, the proponents sought to have the last word, to be present at the defining moment. But often these struggles are imperceptible to the outsider:

Within a field, people fight to the death over things that are imperceptible to those who find themselves in the next room.

As these battles developed, the field itself changed almost imperceptibly. At first, the use of Latin was a key element in the common culture – there had to be agreement about a common language with which to fight. As history progressed, changes in the use of the language, sometimes infinitesimally small changes, also heralded the very slow rise of the public. The jurists made increasingly loud claims to be placed on an equal footing with the king, to share his power and his authority. ‘The king’s position never dies’ was a saying at the time, and this meant that the position of the king, though it be filled by different individuals, was never absent – ‘the kingdom was never vacant’ was another way to describe the same situation. But if this were so, then it meant that the jurists were there to legitimize the king, even as they sought to control him. Jurists were thus faced with three contradictions – first, they supported law against nature. They were on the side of merit, the side of the acquired against the inherited. From the moment they started to argue for the rights of the king, they, at one and the same time, tied the king’s hands. Second, they were captured by the noble nature of their offices, which were inherited, just as the throne was inherited. And third, they were holders of a technical competence, the right to exercise a skill over a given territory.

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305 Ibid., page 316.
306 Ibid., page 318.
Bourdieu is now coming to the end of his lectures, and the argument is becoming more intense, and less susceptible to interruptions and asides.\footnote{Ibid., page 322-323} In the next lecture, Bourdieu turns his attention to Keith Baker’s work, \textit{Inventing the French Revolution}.\footnote{Baker, Keith Michael. 1990. \textit{Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century}. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.} History, Bourdieu reminds us, is a stake itself in the struggle for understanding. History is always an account of events, not the events themselves. History always points to what might have happened, but it can never substitute for the ‘real thing’, whatever that means, a point that most historians spectacularly overlook.\footnote{Ibid., page 324.} And in the present story, the two parties engaged in struggle – the king’s party and the state’s party – both made use of the discourse of history to further their aims. Jurists during the sixteenth century began to constitute a field, and this field of power started to establish rules and strategies in which the political struggle took place. Early jurists faced a series of contradictions. For one thing, they were holders of public office that could be inherited, not unlike the king. On the other hand, they turned their face also towards the public, and the establishment of a public realm in which shared governance with the king was the ambition. If, as Sarah Hanley concludes her book, you seek to pass legislation that threatens the jurists’ right of inheritance of office, as was the case in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century, then you hit the jurists where it hurts, and resistance is fierce.

In the eighteenth century, writers were supported by the king’s party with money, offices and honours, and, as they took up these gifts, they renounced their autonomy, and contributed to what Bourdieu calls the royal hagiography.\footnote{Ibid., page 324.} History again becomes a stake in the political struggle. Louis Adrien Le Paige, a bailiff who wrote history, was part of the myth-making process surrounding the king. He proposed that the Parlement had always existed, or at least through the Middle Ages, an argument that had little basis in evidence. This historical reconstruction was established close to the moment of the French Revolution.

Baker establishes a typology of jurists of this period. Three forms of authority existed at this time, based on the three principles of reason, will and justice.\footnote{See pages 325ff.} Parlement emphasized justice; the people focused on the political will of the wider community; the administration spoke the language of reason. As the keeper of the archives, Le Paige had a major hand in telling the story of this period. He became the ideologist of the parliamentarians, for which he found
long-established precedents. Other writers of the period chimed in with their own accounts, Malesherbes, for example offering a contemporary account of the parliamentary role, thus advocating the juridical argument. Guillaume-Joseph Saige wrote an account examining the will of the citizenry. Thus, rather than a single body of ideas, one must understand the rise of the public as the rise of a juridical field in which struggles for the last word on history was a central capital to be fought over.

Bourdieu now draws himself up to his full height in order to deliver the major pronouncement of the day, which is to indicate the contribution of the noblesse de robe made to the emergence of the state. He proposes to leap through history in great strides. Explaining the rise of what he calls ‘the berobed’ describes also the rise of a new power, and a new basis of power, a power founded on ‘... law, education, merit, competence ... capable of opposing powers founded on birth’. Clerks were at the centre of this enterprise, as they wrote, recorded, documented, authenticated, codified and made real the ephemeral. They gained control of the law very early on, because they were at the centre of the emerging legal discourse. Thus when canon lawyers emerged, they were:

... the inventors of a capital of words and concepts that jurists had at their disposal: very often, when it is a question of inventing the social, having the word already means making the thing.

The state is thus an invention, a construction of the jurists. If words are part of the thing they seek to describe, and are significant elements in the formation of the real, then elaborating the legal discourse of the state is at the centre of state formation. Having the last word means having the power to describe, elaborate and form key elements of the new political field. Thus the power of words is a real power, the power to name, to bring into being elements of the social world that were previously invisible. Jurists are those who own a capital of words, concepts, discourses. In archaic societies, it was the poet who had the last word, the one person who could say something when everyone else had run out of words. Jurists could fall back on an immense treasure-house of words. Jurists were able to offer solutions to problems, existing problems, certainly, but also problems without precedent.

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312 Ibid., page 326.
313 Traditionally French aristocrats who gained titles because of their administrative positions.
314 Ibid., page 329.
315 Bourdieu’s phrase, page 330.
316 Ibid.
Jurists early on were asked by the king to manage the law. They were ennobled to do so. The clerks were connected to the church through canon law.\footnote{Ibid., page 338, Bourdieu’s last phrase of the lecture of November 28.} They made use of the church, and the church provided an early model to follow. The rise of a form of ‘civic humanism’ is the rise of this historical exchange with the church. The break with the church is a move towards the autonomy of the political and the creation of a new political field. The rise of the clerks ends with the rise of the public. They are involved with the immense work of the codification of the new practices. And understanding this may help us understand that ‘this whole history is the history of our thinking of this history’.\footnote{Ibid.}

Bourdieu now faces his last two lectures at the end of a long series of presentations:

> Everything I have said throughout these lectures rests on the idea that ideas do things, that ideas make reality, and that the view [of the world], the standpoint, the nomos, all those things I have mentioned a hundred times, are constructors of reality, to the point that the purest and most abstract battles … always have a relationship in the last resort with reality, in both their origins and effects, which are extremely powerful.\footnote{Ibid., page 341.}

Thus a history of the state given in crudely Marxist-materialist terms will not suffice. The genesis of the field of politics and the genesis of the system of ideas constitutes the ‘first conclusion of (his) analysis’.\footnote{Ibid.} His second conclusion is that:

> … those theories of the state that contribute to the construction of the state, and thus to the reality of the state as we know it, are the product of social agents located in social space.\footnote{Ibid., page 342.}

The jurists, the ‘berobed’, had to make the state prevail. Their interest was in creating the public and the universal, and, by this process, they created themselves and the offices they hold.

Bourdieu now turns again to the problem of the French Revolution, and he gives himself a quarter of an hour to deal with it.\footnote{Ibid., page 345.} How much is the
Revolution part of a long-term pattern? (the longue durée) For Bourdieu, the Revolution was not a rupture, but a stage in the rise of the ‘beromed’, the rise of the judicial field, the rise of the public, and by extension, the rise of the state. It was associated also with the rise of the meta-capital of the state, a power over all other capitals. The state that emerged from the revolution was not just a place where economic capital concentrated, but also a storehouse of symbolic capital. Thus the debates about the French Revolution as a bourgeois revolution are, in Bourdieu’s eyes, false debates. What has been damaging has been the rise of widespread analysis of whether such a bourgeois revolution has occurred in a large number of other countries – Japan and England immediately come to mind. The ethnocentrism of the analysis leaves Bourdieu speechless, and, in his view, all the analytical power and energy that has been directed towards this problem is wasted.\textsuperscript{323} In The State Nobility\textsuperscript{324} he argues that the French Revolution did not change anything. The rise of the jurists and of juridical capital, and the rise of the state itself, enabled the perpetuation of a dominant group to continue.

His fifteen minutes up, and his analysis of the French Revolution complete, Bourdieu now turns his attention towards ‘The state and the nation’.\textsuperscript{325} He briefly rehearses his argument about the shift from the dynastic state to the juridical state. There arose the notion of a nation, against regions, against private interests, against classes, allowing the emergence of the national citizen. Thus jurists made the state, which was charged with making the nation. Intellectuals, as the bearers of substantial quantities of cultural and symbolic capital, are deeply engaged, and are complicit in, the formation of the state, and consequently in the construction of the nation. And the educational process is one of the fundamental elements of this process.

The state might then be called the ‘centre of a civil religion’.\textsuperscript{326} The nation thus has within it elements of a public imaginary, a national self-representation, and this is embedded, and manifested in, a common history, a common language, familiar landscapes and territory, a love of country. Thus jurists constructed the state, and they created the pre-conditions for the development of a nation. In the case of France, Bourdieu argues that the state made the nation, and all those who spoke French were part of that nation. But for him, the German case was quite different – here the nation made the state, and all German speakers were members of the nation. In France the state came

\textsuperscript{323} Ibid., page 346.
\textsuperscript{325} Pages 346-348.
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid., page 348.
first. In Germany the nation came first and created the state. Thus there is an English history of the state, a German history and a French history, and there are logics that are common to all these histories, as well as major contrasts, especially in the philosophies that gave rise to these states.

We finally confront his last lecture on the state, the meeting of 12 December, 1991. Here he plans to bring the argument up to date. He reiterates his earlier account of the simultaneous birth of the juridical state, and the birth of the citizen and the nation. What’s missing thus far is the story of the rise of the parliament. For Bourdieu what characterises the parliament particularly is the rise of an apparently organised consensus which hides the reality of a ‘regulated dissension’. This mystification is a precondition for the political system to work. It thus limits the modes of dissension and excludes those not playing a part in legitimate political life.

Parliament is the theatre in which dissent is displayed, acted out, directed, regulated and managed. But the movement ‘from the paper state to the real state’ required several generations of steady work. The welfare state is central to this process, making material some of the promises established in the paper state. This process creates the conditions under which ‘the people’ might be enticed to play the game. Given that they have something of a developing stake in the state, they will be gradually more willing to acquiesce to its will. Thus the welfare state emerges. The question then becomes – how to manage social affairs. The work the state is engaged in is to ‘domesticate the dominated’. Weber imagined that the work of the state, in part, was involved in trapping the dangerous classes through the relief of fundamental problems involving the usual welfarist litany – health, education, economic security (to some degree), pensions and the like. This stratagem thus involves integrating the dominated, who are invited to ‘join the game’. Still, in the national unconscious, and especially in the rhetoric of the right, the notion of the ‘dangerous classes’ is vividly alive. One of the major roles of the school in the 19th century was to reduce this danger, and one way to do it was to focus on common issues that affected all classes, such as cholera and other national problems. The dominated can choose to exit the system, but there are genuine material costs involved in exiting. The dominated are thus forced, in a sense, to make concessions in order to be included in the universe of citizenry.

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327 His phrase, page 355.
328 Bourdieu’s heading for a section of writing on pages 356-358.
329 Bourdieu on page 359, quoting Weber.
330 ‘Joining the game’ is Bourdieu’s phrase on page 359.
In recent years, the rise of a 19th century theory of personal blame had made a re-appearance. ‘The poor are poor because they don’t work hard enough’ is typical of this genre of thinking, and leads to completely new theories of the state. The rise of the state in its early forms was associated with the socialization of risk. In Bourdieu’s view, social scientists were complicit in the rise of the state, in the kinds of ideas that gave rise to the state. The rise of the state depended on a cultural revolution.

Bourdieu now comes to a final set of conclusions. Why was this long digression into history necessary, he first asks. It was to try to free ourselves from the ‘state within us’, that mode of thinking directed by the state, shaped by the state, and originating in the state, that forces us to think of the state in a certain way. He calls this form of amnesia the ‘amnesia of genesis’, that amnesia that arises from forgetting the social origins of our thought. In order to combat this dilemma, Bourdieu has proposed genetic thinking, going to the source of the system of ideas. We must bring those things that seem natural out of the shadows and make them visible again. At the heart of the issue, as with the rise of the state, is the challenge to pre-existing mental structures. Symbolic revolutions are always violent revolutions:

... if wars of succession are among the most violent of wars – think of Yugoslavia, for example – this is undoubtedly because they challenge mental structures.

There is always a symbolic dimension in revolutions. Symbolic revolutions include, for example, the great religious revolutions. May 68 was [perhaps] a false revolution, but it was perceived as a true revolution and is still producing effects, since it affected the mental structures of the whole academic body across the whole world. Symbolic revolutions unleash terrible violence because they attack the integrity of minds, they attack people in what is most essential for them, it’s a question of life and death.

What conclusions can we then draw from the genetic history of the state? First, that the bureaucratic field embodies the meta-power, the power of all powers, the control of all fields. In the present setting in France, the social ministries are the locations where the spending largely takes place, and around these spendings struggles occur, both within and without the state. The left hand state, the state of social spending, is continually under threat

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331 Pages 366-370.
332 Ibid., pages 366-367.
from the right hand state, the financial and commercial ministries. Indeed, for the last 20 years according to Bourdieu, the work of the last 200 years has been deconstructed. There is thus a crisis in morality, in the collective wisdom, in the philosophy of collective responsibility. There is a loss in the belief in public service. There is a loss in the belief that the state can do some good. As a result, there is an increase in day-to-day suffering, and a turning away from the state, since it no longer provides for ordinary people. Bourdieu then draws a startling conclusion:

Do not all these phenomena that are described to us in a prophetic mode have some connection with the dissolution of those things that that were progressively built up? Isn’t this a kind of despair about the state, a kind of despair … (that leads to) … the attitudes of those who, not participating in the state, no longer have any temporal recourse and so retreat into the spiritual, into a form of reverie? Isn’t the ‘return of religion’, in actual fact, a retreat from the state?

It is no surprise that Bourdieu ends his lectures with a question. A sustaining theme throughout these lectures has been how much remains to be explained, and he went on, in the following years until his death in 2002, to speak of the politics of social suffering in a wide range of media. These lectures were thus hardly his last word on politics or the state. But two further powerful conclusions can immediately be drawn. Bourdieu has now implicitly pointed to the achievements of this state that he has lovingly traced from the Middle Ages, and thrown his hat in with those who defend its accomplishments on behalf of the dominated classes. He has also prophesied much of what was to come in attacks on the French state, and particularly the rise of Islamic militancy, right in the heart of the Republic in Paris, among Islamic youngsters, turning away from the state and towards religious sources of inspiration.

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333 This is the first time that Bourdieu has introduced this terminology, though it was widely used in his later work. For a simple way into this reasoning, see the interview Bourdieu gave to R.P. Droit and T. Ferenczi in 1992 in the journal Variant, issue 32. This can be accessed at http://www.variant.org.uk/32texts/bourdieu32.html. (Recovered March 29, 2017.)
334 Ibid., page 369.
335 Ibid., pages 369-370.
336 This was not the end of Bourdieu’s political writings, and indeed, in the last ten years of his life, ending with his death in 2002, he spent enormous amounts of intellectual and physical energy mobilizing academics and others against neoliberalism. See especially the journal Libér, which he launched in 1989, the foundation of Raison D’Agir, a collective of workers, activists, intellectuals, journalists, with branches throughout Europe, which also published short topical books on political subjects, and many published works. He wrote On Television (New Press, 1999, New York) an
I plan now to summarise, in a series of brief points, the main elements of Bourdieu’s exposition of his theory of the state.

1. As one reads the lectures, it is impossible to ignore the social milieu, the setting at the Collège, the wide variety of people in the audience, the many questions he tried to answer, the TV programs and contemporary events he sought to understand and explain, even as he propagated this theory of the state. This is no intellectual mandarin speaking to the masses from on high, with perfectly curated notes before him, the air of the state’s authority surrounding him like a halo. Instead, Bourdieu’s argument wanders all over the place, meandering into multiple asides, dawdling down cul-de-sacs, and is finally turned back to the main road of his argument by moments of brilliance. We are rescued from this constant threat of chaos by occasional glimpses of revelation and insight. There is certainly a logic and a pathway to follow, but it is a pathway that only the most durable follower is likely to trace to the end. Bourdieu’s is a theory of pessimism. It is about domination, pure and simple, (yet nothing here is simple) and not about class or the popular masses. He develops a magnificent and elaborate theory of the state, its formation and its purposes. And this argument has centred on the symbolic world, the role of ideas and theories with relation to the state. In 1986, in an interview he had commented about a report he had written for the government on education, and was asked whether the report would influence policy:

I think my optimism is that there is some little power of ideas. Before I held the conviction that said ‘don’t believe it, don’t believe in the power of ideas’. But now, I say that under some structural and political conditions, there is some power to ideas. So, we must use it. If not the power structure is so terrible, so complete.337

In these lectures, he is willing to take a much stronger stand on the question of whether ideas matter:

Everything I have said throughout these lectures rests on the idea that ideas do things, that ideas make reality, and that the view [of the world], the standpoint, the nomos, all those things I have mentioned a hundred times, are constructors of reality, to the point that the purest and most abstract battles

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337 Harker et al., op. cit., pages 54-55.
... always have a relationship in the last resort with reality, in both their origins and effects, which are extremely powerful.\textsuperscript{338}

2. There are many deficiencies in his argument, but for the sake of brevity, I will mention only two. There is the unambiguous sense that Bourdieu affords the state a will and volition that is hard to justify. For Bourdieu, the state is an actor, with a will, a logic and its own forms of motivation.\textsuperscript{339} But more than this, a second claim of incompleteness seems obvious. While the rise of the juridical state, with its symbolic violence added to physical violence, is brilliantly portrayed, there is a complete neglect of other fundamental aspects of state genesis, and especially economic factors, which for reasons that might well be closely tied to his resistance to committing Marxist inanities, are almost completely absent. It is a telling silence.

3. Adding symbolic violence to physical violence in Weber’s famous account of the state as a ‘... community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory’\textsuperscript{340} upturns decades of thinking about the state as the last resort of physical violence in order to ensure order. It is a brave and innovative step forward in accounting for state formation, and especially when Bourdieu clearly gives primacy to the symbolic, and insists on the penetration of the symbolic into the heart of the material. And his extraordinary writing on the move from the dynastic state to the juridical state, the elaboration of the centuries-long processes of codification, classification, the concentration of capitals, the naming, the authorizing and the hierarchizing of the social, is massively impressive.

4. This rise of the juridical state Bourdieu interprets as a form of ‘magic’, a magic which he describes in two ways. Using Marcel Mauss as his inspiration, he argues that the state gains its magic because the audience, in this case the citizenry, allow that such a magic just might exist, believe in the possibility that something wonderful just possibly could occur, that justice will break out, that economic security might prevail, that the old systems of exploitation and domination will dissolve. Thus with the rise of the kingly seal, the documents that are passed down from on high have a magical quality to them, dispensing hope and possibilities to those in the lower orders. But in a second way, the state gains a magic by becoming the storehouse of all capitals, the focus especially of symbolic capital, and more than any of this, becomes the place where the value of these capitals is decided, and where

\textsuperscript{338} Ibid., page 341.
\textsuperscript{339} See especially pages 215-216. On these pages, the state seems to take on a life of its own, independent of the actors engaged in its formation.
\textsuperscript{340} Max Weber, \textit{Politics as a Vocation}, 1918.
control of all the social fields resides. This ‘meta-capital’ is where the magical power of the state comes to rest. Thus:

The state is the culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital: capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) informational capital, and symbolic capital. It is this concentration as such which constitutes the state as the holder of a sort of meta-capital granting power over other species of capital and over their holders.\(^{341}\)

5. The state is ‘within us’, claims Bourdieu, and to escape this mental prison-house, we must implicate Bourdieu’s genetic structuralism to set ourselves free, in order to enable us to examine the whole matter anew. Symbolic transformations, such as the rise of the state, are so violent and so painful because they attack our mental structures, and alter the way we view the world. The state has become so much part of us that we can see it no longer. It has become invisible. To save us from perpetual blindness, Bourdieu proposes a new method to us for opening our eyes.

6. The world of the state that Bourdieu reveals, this universalising, this dominating, this all-encompassing world of hierarchy, privilege and relentless power seems to be the last place to seek utopia. Yet Bourdieu clearly sees in the rise of the modern state a field in which the forlorn hopes for liberty, fraternity and equality might still be kept alive. If there is any doubt about this, remember his vigorous campaign on behalf of the welfare state.\(^{342}\) And Bourdieu provides also the mental apparatus by which we might seek a greater freedom:

The ultimate purpose of Bourdieu’s sociology, then, is nothing other than to foster the blossoming of a new, self-critical, Aufklärung (enlightenment) fit for the new millennium. By directing us to probe the foundations of knowledge, the structures of social being, and the hidden possibilities of history, it offers us instruments of individual and collective self-appropriation and thus of wisdom – it helps us pursue, as it were, the originary mission of philosophy.\(^{343}\)

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\(^{342}\) See also, among many other sources, an explicit defence of the welfare state in the interview Bourdieu gave to R.P. Droit and T. Ferenczi in 1992 in the journal *Variant*, op. cit.

4. A Future in Search of a Theory

We began this journey through the theoretical landscape of the state in the company of Antonio Gramsci, who took the unusual path of explaining why, even in the face of fascism, and the rise of the totalitarian state, there could be spaces, ways of avoiding oppression, methods of living separately from the state, that allowed a future to be lived out beyond fascist understandings of the future.\(^{344}\) Since the rise of the industrial order, and certainly since Marx and beyond, social theorists of the left have struggled to explain the persistence of capitalism, a system designed to produce inequality. They have sought to explain how the state, in its various forms, has managed to sustain an economic system riddled with crisis, competition and uncertainty, which otherwise, according to their view, would have collapsed as Marx had predicted that it would. And beyond the inevitable inequality that this system produced, they have also tried to understand how the state might be used to further a more equal world. In these forms of theory, from Gramsci’s complicated arguments that showed the state is not just a violent instrument, even under fascism, to Poulantzas’s arguments that even in Greece, Portugal and Spain, more recent authoritarian régimes, there are sources of hope, to the uprisings of May 68, which offered the prospect of revolution in the most advanced capitalist societies of the West, these imaginings of utopia were kept alive.

Were these utopian ambitions always doomed to disappointment? No simple answer can be provided, obviously enough. The Russian Revolution, which many on the left came to understand provided a false hope, and which tarnished socialism with the permanent burden of totalitarianism, was also profoundly important in offering a counter-weight to capitalism, as Poulantzas has shown in detail. His systematic retelling of the influence of Russian theoretical work on western theories of the state is salutary. But any hopes that still lingered for a Soviet-style revolution in the West were washed away by the gradual understanding of the reality of daily life under ‘actually existing socialism’, the life-world of those living in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the other Soviet satellites after World War Two. The brutal crushing of dissidents in Hungary in 1956, followed by the Prague Spring of 1968, in which Hungarian moves towards liberalism were squashed by the invasion of 500,000 Warsaw Pact troops, led to a burning of Communist Party

\(^{344}\) The role of women within Italian fascism is particularly instructive. As we have seen, while Mussolini wanted women to return to the home, and to produce soldiers for the new régime, very few women followed his orders, and were able to avoid the dictates of the authoritarian state quite successfully for many years.
membership cards throughout Western Europe, and a widespread disenchantment with the entire Soviet-inspired enterprise. \(^{345}\)

But while a revolutionary shift to a Soviet-style society might have been swept aside, much hope from the left was still placed in the rise of the welfare state. In the U.K. in the 1950’s and 1960’s the rise of ‘Croslandism’, that theory of the state that argued that, with appropriate compromises, the working class could get what they needed through a social-democratic form of collaboration, provided a signal moment in western politics. Compromise was never enough among the Eurocommunists, and they were not to be mollified because the health system had got a little better. They wanted a change in the mode of production. But in Britain in the 1950s, some major industries had, in fact, been socialised, the new national health system was up and running, and an elaborate system of pensions was now in place. It seemed to many that the basic work of social improvement was over. The Fordist utopia of the post-war period – a fridge in every kitchen, a chicken in every pot, and a car in every driveway – had been achieved for many, even while private enterprise had steadily been flourishing.

The ‘false revolution’ of May 68 provided further fuel for the revolutionary fire. The partial achievements of the welfare state might be able to be completed through revolutionary means. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s’ social theorists of the left continued to write about advanced capitalism and the political possibilities for transformation. Much of the writing, as Bourdieu has sharply pointed out, took the form of Marxist functionalism, doing no more than explaining how the state served to provide the social architecture of capitalist reproduction. But while radical movements were having some success, if not in Western Europe, then in Latin America and elsewhere, a politics of revolution and of social change was always closely connected to a theory of the state.

These reversals and advances were brought to a halt by the Thatcher-Reagan shift to the right. On the back of a world-wide fiscal crisis of the state, which brought the Fordist era to an end, the promise of the welfare state also came to be widely discounted. The state, rather than withering away, had become kidnapped by the private economy in a form of corporatism that meant the private sector flourished, and the dispossessed were gently and quietly

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\(^{345}\) Historian E.P. Thompson famously left the British Communist party in 1956 after Hungary, along with many others, but others kept the faith against all the evidence, include Eric Hobsbawm, a close ally of Bourdieu’s, who never lost faith in the Communist cause.
disenfranchised. As many have said, the great achievement of Thatcherism was Blairism, the belief that compromise with capitalism and market forces was the only possible utopia, the only way forward, the only theory of the left still standing, the only hope for progressive forces in the emerging ‘late-late capitalism’. Stuart Hall perfectly captured the ‘cultural turn’ of this period, during which the common sense was corralled by rightist politicians who understood, much quicker than most theorists of the state, that the cultural and symbolic territory was the most important territory to capture. Branding, marketing and the domination of systems of communication became the battleground that Blair and his acolytes understood so well, and their success in this field propelled them forward through several elections. Bourdieu could have predicted this shift, but few on the left were still listening.

5. Brief Skirmishes with the Future

While there may be no new theory of the state carrying all before it at the time of writing, there are many younger writers doing battle to explain parts of the most recent phases of capitalism. Here I briefly mention three – Jules Boykoff, Naomi Klein and George Monbiot.346

In a series of recent books, articles and interviews347, the political theorist Jules Boykoff examines the particular form that capitalism takes around one of the major global sporting events – the Olympics. Labelling this phenomenon ‘Celebration Capitalism’, Boykoff claims that a new era in capitalism has been reached in the guise of ‘capitalism at play’348, and that the


347 For further details, see http://julesboykoff.org. This is a very partial and incomplete account of a very detailed and impressive body of work.

348 Page 155 in Power Games: a political history of the Olympics, Verso, London and New York, 2016. But see also the earlier Celebration Capitalism and the Olympic Games, Routledge, London, 2014, which first propagates this notion in full form. In the publicity material for this earlier book, the writer comments that ‘(The) Games have
vast operations of the Olympic movement, with its considerable state investment in infrastructure from the host countries, and widespread private investment from commercial sponsors, represent a new phase in capitalist evolution:

In this century, the Olympics have taken the form of what I call “celebration capitalism”, a political-economic formation marked by lopsided public-private partnerships that favor private enterprise while dumping risk on the taxpayer. The normal rules … are temporarily suspended in the name of a media-trumpeted, hyper-commercial spectacle, all safeguarded by beefed-up security forces responsible for preventing terrorism, corralling political dissent, and protecting the festivities. Celebration capitalism is an upbeat shakedown, trickle-up economics with wrenching human costs.349

Boykoff provides an impressive and exhaustive critical history of the Olympics until, and including, the recent events in Brazil during 2016. For him, celebration capitalism is not the neoliberalism of the past, but a rather new phenomenon. It invokes a notion that the market has become the common sense of the day, but, for him, the Olympics are not merely the latest site on which the neoliberal agenda plays out. For Boykoff, this is something different – an unhealthy re-alliance between the state and the private sector reminiscent of an earlier regulationist period of capitalist development. Celebration capitalism exists ‘in (a) state of exception’,350 in which the normal rules of government and ordered activity are thrown out the window, and unusual and irregular events are allowed to occur. Indeed, it may be the case that the very distinction between public and private dissolves. Often the state and the ‘authorities’ can give political coverage and legitimacy to what turns out to be simply another massive opportunity for private profit. The relationship between the public and the private sector is thus wholly unequal, with the private sector rapidly outstripping the state’s capacity to control it. In the end, the many promises of public benefits, such as new housing, new sporting arenas, and the many other social improvements that are listed in the ‘bid documents’ turn out to be empty

become a massive planned economy designed to shield the rich from risk while providing them with a spectacle to treasure. Placing political economy at the center of the analysis, and drawing on interdisciplinary research in sociology, politics, geography, history, and economics, Boykoff develops an innovative theory of “celebration capitalism”, the manipulation of state actors as partners that drives us towards public–private partnerships in which the public pays and the private profits’. (Recovered from https://www.routledge.com/Celebration-Capitalism-and-the-Olympic-Games/Boykoff/p/book/9780415821971 on April 3rd, 2017)

349 Ibid., page 155.
350 Ibid., page 158.
arguments propagated for the sole purpose of gaining the support of the Olympic committee members. Careful analysis of sixteen games clearly indicates a negative impact on income for those countries involved. A final outcome is that the public arena must manage any debts that remain once the crowds have left, after the private market shifts the profits elsewhere. All this takes place under the management of a vast security apparatus run by private security companies, who ensure social order is maintained against any possible protests or resistances, the monopoly of the legitimate use of coercion now transferred from the public to the private arena.

Boykoff documents with care the recent events in Greece, London and in Brazil to show how these elements of celebration capitalism work themselves out in practice. He is also at pains to suggest what might happen in the future. Anti-Olympic resistance workers have been active for many years at all the Games gatherings, though usually marginalized to the edge of the action by both public and private security forces. The announcement of Brazil’s success in attracting the Games to Rio was greeted by the country as a chance to show the world that Brazil was moving into the first echelon of advanced societies, so that the hyperbole associating nationalism with the Games was clearly alive and well. But it was also true that private developers and commercial interests were lined up to reap huge profits from this most recent reincarnation of celebration capitalism. How this juggernaut can be successfully resisted in the future remains the over-arching political question. Demolishing entire neighbourhoods, including housing when necessary, coupled with the routine repression of dissidents, seems to have been part of all these recent events, and things were to be no different in Brazil. In Brazil’s case, a major concern was to quell dissent among the favelas, and so a police chief was involved in the bid to assure the decision-makers that all would be secure. The problem of possible terrorist attacks was often used as ideological coverage for the massive police and security presence in recent Games.

Boykoff cites several possible sources of resistance. Clearly the entire privatization and commercialization of what was once supposed to be an amateur undertaking, symbolizing visions of justice, equity and fair play, has been hopelessly compromised and alienated from its origins. Whether this shameful degradation of plausible values still carries any political weight is

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352 Ibid., page 225.
unclear. There ought to come a point when the slight difference between high moral principles and actual practices turns into such a large chasm that even the most greed-ridden intelligence is confronted with the gap, but this seems not to be the case. If high principle will not shift the direction of the Games, what will? Clearly local communities can fight back, and sometimes do so successfully.\(^{353}\) Recent versions of the games have played lip-service to Green values, though they have often proved to be empty commitments.\(^{354}\) Boykoff also looks into the future to see where the Games are headed now. As the guest at a Franz Beckenbauer event,\(^{355}\) Boykoff was able to present an alternative view to representatives of the IOC, and was encouraged to see that many at the highest levels of organization were aware of the crisis at hand, and determined to see a change. For Boykoff, they will change because their economic self-interest is at stake; their brands are under threat.\(^{356}\) While such people remain indifferent to the needs of ordinary people, they may do very little, simply changing the image people have of the Olympics, rather than making any real alterations – an updated version of shifting the furniture on the deck of the Titanic. In December 2014, the same potentates ‘huddled in Monaco’ to create reforms for the 2020 Olympics, an agenda that was passed unanimously.\(^{357}\) The press unanimously confirmed that a revolution had occurred, but clearly the devil will be in the details, and especially in the matter of whether any promises will be kept in measurable terms. Several countries have now dropped out of the race to host the Games in the future, often because of financial concerns. None of the Agenda 2020 proposals involve accountability. Owen Gibson from the Guardian newspaper argues that the agreement is ‘the shallow, platitudinous soup of what passes for international sporting diplomacy’.\(^{358}\)

Instead of empty words, Boykoff calls for genuine reform, starting with facing the actual costs of running the Games,\(^ {359}\) including the costs to the local populations affected by the plans for the Games We need also to face the conflicts of interest that abound around such people as the auditors, who also turn out to be sponsors. The Games have embraced ‘Greenness’ as a

\(^{353}\) See Boykoff, page 228ff. for a Brazilian example.

\(^{354}\) See Boykoff’s section on ‘Greenwash Gold’, pages 231-236.

\(^{355}\) Boykoff outlines his experience as the guest of celebration capital at a meeting of FIFA and IOC heads in Austria in fall, 2014, where he was able to outline his alternative vision to members of the higher echelons of the sporting world.

\(^{356}\) Ibid., page 258.

\(^{357}\) Ibid., page 239.


\(^{359}\) Ibid., pages 241-252.
theme of the Games, but little has actually happened. The Games should democratize the political structures around the Olympics, lowering the gender and class barriers to membership of the IOC, for example. There needs also to be transparency, especially covering the reimbursement of IOC members. Gender bias has long been an obstacle to equality among the IOC, and it still remains a barrier. And finally, the IOC needs to go back to the lofty principles of the founders of the Games – human rights, dignity, equity and a lack of commercial involvement. Boykoff sees in these values much to be encouraged. He is simply urging IOC members to live up to their own charter. Activism has, in his view, already shone a critical light on the Games, and this must be beneficial. In Boston, Boykoff points to the success of activists preventing a bid going through in January 2015. A plan for preventing the games coming to a city near you seems to be emerging. Boykoff concludes:

Despite the IOC’s vise-like grip on power, despite the privilege threaded through the history of the Games, despite the multifarious ways everyday people in Olympic city after Olympic city have been marginalized and manipulated, the struggle continues. In some ways, activists and Games critics of today are empowered like never before. Momentum has shifted. “Hegemony,” as the great Stuart Hall reminds us, “is never for forever”. Three cheers for that.

Boykoff sums up his argument in the following way:

Capitalism is a nimble shapeshifter, and that sometimes takes the form of neoliberalism replete with privatisation, deregulation, financialization, and ‘letting the markets decide’. But in reality there are many ‘actually existing capitalisms’ that can be evolving at the same time. … This is consistent with David Harvey’s insight that neoliberalism and capitalism more generally ‘is an unstable and evolving regime of accumulation …’

Boykoff’s account is a highly original, well-documented and creative way to assess a large component of capitalist culture – much of what he says has applicability to a wide range of social and cultural phenomena. Football’s four-yearly World Cup, not to mention the English Premier League, and the vast empires of American sport - the NFL, Major League Baseball and the various professional basketball leagues come immediately to mind. It is thus a most useful addition to the growing literature on the present moves that capitalism is making. It also seeks, as Bourdieu had hoped sociology and

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360 Ibid., page 251.
361 Ibid., page 252.
362 Personal communication, April 2017.
critical thinking might do, to uncover, reveal and expose what it often sold as a common sense, a taken-for-granted discourse about the world that hides a structure of domination and exploitation. Boykoff thus carries on the classical tradition of sociological exposure and truth-telling that Bourdieu calls on us to continue into the future. Boykoff’s is not a theory of capitalism in general, but an account of a particular strand of capitalist development. Nor does Boykoff continue the theorizing of the state in the fullest sense, though he does point out the regulationist basis that characterises the political economy of celebration capitalism. And, most impressively, he does provide us with a detailed account of the politics of resistance to the new capitalist directions.

In a discussion of Naomi Klein’s work, Boykoff comments:

Celebration capitalism is disaster capitalism’s affable cousin. It thrives on social euphoria, not collective shock.363

There is a much darker side to recent patterns of exploitation, and the Canadian journalist and author Naomi Klein has been exposing some of this activity through what she has termed ‘disaster capitalism’ for some years now.364 In The Shock Doctrine, Klein traces the origins of a form of capitalist adventurism that arises around human and social disasters. In the aftermath of major catastrophes – earthquakes, tsunamis, tornados, coup d’états and terrorist acts – populations are so traumatized that the normal rules of human behaviour are suspended, and this moment of social chaos provides an opportunity for the free markets to dive in and offer instant solutions. In the case of New Orleans, for example, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, right-wing activists, supported by funding from foundations and the Republican government of George W. Bush, ran into the wreckage, offering school vouchers to parents whose children no longer had schools. Proposing for-profit alternatives backed by the government’s funds, they sought to take over the traditional publically-funded school system in order to gain ideological and economic control of the school system, a move that met with stiff resistance from African-American parents, who found in the existence of the public school system a mechanism for sustaining civil rights gains from the past. This is one of many examples that Klein brings to bear from all over the world, from the privatization of prisons in Britain and the U.S.,

363 Ibid., page 159.
to case studies from Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Iraq. Fuelled by neoliberal ideas stemming from Friedman and the Chicago School, Klein proposes that the free market strategy is to seize on weak partners, and to exploit human misery whenever the possibility exists, whether it be in the ‘newly liberated’ Poland after the end of Communism, or Iraq after the U.S.-led invasion. ‘Catastrophe Capitalism’ enjoys the anarchy that derives from social disorder, seeing it as an opportunity to create a new structure based on free market principles. The fact that such initiatives create massive reaction, resistance and bitter opposition, often leading to further disasters, seems not to register in the minds of the protagonists of the new order. In ‘Disaster Capitalism’, Klein sees the rise of a global economic system that often requires terror, and certainly social catastrophe, to do its work. She sees, for example the ‘inner harmony’ between the violence of the Pinochet régime and the free market policies that followed. If the shock of the revolution was not enough, and if the free market policies didn’t hold people’s attention, then a third shock from the military and the police was always available to be used.

In its wake, it is hard to see what can be done by the progressive forces of the left, and nor is there an elaborated theory of the state developed here that could be used to explain what might be possible through government action. Instead, while the arguments about the rise of this new form of capitalism are immensely persuasive, brilliantly argued and thoroughly convincing, there is little in the way of a counter-weight to suggest what strategies might be successful. In a review of The Shock Doctrine, Stiglitz comments:

Klein ends on a hopeful note, describing nongovernmental organizations and activists around the world who are trying to make a difference. After 500 pages of “The Shock Doctrine,” it’s clear they have their work cut out for them.\textsuperscript{366}

Given Klein’s role as a journalist is to document the truth as she sees it, and not provide elaborate theories of the state for progressive academics to consider, the vision she has of the state must be inferred from what is absent from the account. In the case of Iraq, for example, she sees a dystopia in the wreckage of the war, but also a site at which Haliburton still does business and still makes money. The state is in ruins, everyday life a matter of survival, and the free market survives. And yet, it is hard to argue that the free marketeers saw anything more in these conditions than the chance to make a


\textsuperscript{366} Ibid.
profit. The conditions in these settings have often been anarchic, chaotic and without logic, and certainly not a result of the logic of the state. Putin’s state-capitalism is hardly anarchy, but it is hardly a free market. It certainly has a logic to it. And the problem with Iraq in the aftermath of the war, from the perspective of the United States, was that the lack of a bureaucratic structure, the lack of a functioning state, meant that the supply of oil was threatened.\textsuperscript{367} The point is that a free-market utopia does not always result from disaster, where the outcomes are often uncertain, where states may rise and fall, and free market initiatives are commonly incomplete.

Thus it might be reasonable to conclude that Klein’s work as an anti-capitalist global climate change activist has opened our collective eyes to the tragedies occurring around us, and more than this, that she has connected a series of disparate case studies into a general logic connecting these various examples, to the rise of a single cause – neoliberalism. When she does invoke a theory of the state, one might draw the conclusion that this is an instrumentalist theory – the state in the hands of the neoliberals. Like Boykoff, she has contributed massively to our understanding of a major slice of ‘late-late capitalism’. It remains for the rest of us to propose arguments that might explain the role of the state and other public institutions in defending the public good against the jackals of private profit. The need for further research that indicates, on a case by case basis, how the state reacts in the wake of these crises, is part of the agenda that Bourdieu and others have proposed.

On March 16\textsuperscript{th}, 2017, while searching for a contemporary author to examine who was writing about the most recent stages of capitalism, an email from the familiar leftist publisher Verso dropped into my email inbox. The announcement, as if from some leftist heaven, presented by chance the latest incarnation of a critique of neoliberalism in the form of a new book from George Monbiot.\textsuperscript{368} In \textit{How Did we Get into this Mess}, Monbiot reports on the

\textsuperscript{367} See, for example, John Gray, \textit{The Guardian}, September 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2007.

\textsuperscript{368} Monbiot is, according to his own website, an English-born, Oxford educated, investigative journalist mostly focused on environmental issues, but with a wider remit to investigate everything neoliberalist. See http://www.monbiot.com/about/, recovered on April 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2017. The new book being advertised in March 2017 is \textit{How did we get into this Mess}, (Verso, London, 2017). Monbiot has written profligately, and his books, not to mention his videos, interviews, blogs and other forms of exposition, include \textit{Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding} (May 2013, Allen Lane); and \textit{Bring on the Apocalypse: Six Arguments for Global Justice} (March 2008, Atlantic Books)
worst excesses of ‘late-late capitalism’. His attack on neoliberalism centres on the enormously undemocratic nature of the structures that surround the economic inequality that it brings – the lack of regulation surrounding the economic system, the capacity of the rich to avoid paying their taxes, for companies to get away with polluting without penalty, for industry to avoid paying fair wages. We have arrived, he proposes, at democracy for the rich, and exploitation for the poor. The rich are beyond the law; the poor are oppressed by it. He notes Frederick Hayek’s call for democracy to be put to one side in the service of free market capitalism, because he saw it as an impediment. Neoliberalism, in Monbiot’s view, has been enormously successful on a global scale, leading to the privatization of the state, to corporations too big to fail, and to widespread deregulation, amid calls to reduce state activity. But in the Bush-era collapse of AIG and other major private corporations in the United States, he sees ‘an intense irony’ in the fact that it was the deep involvement of the state that was required to rescue many large private institutions that could not survive without massive state intervention. Thus:

There is a profound irony here, in that neoliberalism was supposed to get the state to get out of the way, but it requires intense state involvement in order to function.  

None of this account will be news to those who have been reading this present examination of state theory, or who are politically alert on the left. Monbiot’s retelling of the neoliberal catastrophe had been told before many times. Some of his investigative research has been path-breaking and inventive, adding new richness to the reportage we already have. But one is forced to argue that, with the best intentions in the world, this is a saturated theory in the ‘grounded theory’ sense of that term. The case has already been made, and made many times. Reading Poulantzas, Bourdieu, Wright, Boykoff and Klein is to read from the same songbook – they are all telling the same tale of neoliberalist desecrations. The case has now been profoundly and seriously made in a series of settings, and it is hard to see what further investigations will bring, except, perhaps, to keep us up to date with the latest

\[\text{Heat: How to Stop the Planet Burning (September 2006, Allen Lane); U.S. edition (April 2007, South End Press); The Age of Consent (2003, Flamingo); and Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain (2000, Macmillan).}\]

\[369\] This quotation comes from a YouTube video made by George Monbiot, recovered from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuMnrvVwwWM&feature=youtu.be&utm_source=Master+List&utm_campaign=20000abc4d-US+Direct+-+Monbiot+Neoliberalism&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1f96ba5fab-20000abc4d-410478497, on April 7th, 2017.
horrors that neoliberalism is visiting upon us, certainly no small task, and
probably a valuable one. What is implicit here in Monbiot’s account is that
the state’s more complex role of the past in representing a general interest, in
whatever diminished and incomplete form it may have happened, is now at
an end, and the state has fallen back into instrumentalism, becoming a simple
weapon of capital. All that is left is a state that sustains and supports capitalist
interests. All other interests, whether class, gender, or ethnically-based, have
been relegated to the outer regions of the political order.

For Monbiot, Trump and Brexit are the latest call for freedom for the
billionaires.\textsuperscript{370} They want freedom from red tape, from unions, from
democracy itself. They want freedom from taxation, which, in turn, implies a
loss of social services for others. The result of a loss of regulation for
Monbiot is catastrophic. It means more pollution and lower air quality, a loss
of civil rights, a loss of pay equity - indeed the loss of the entire structure of a
decent civilization.

In \textit{The Age of Consent}, Monbiot challenges the very nature of the
contemporary political order, calling it undemocratic from top to bottom.
For him, the United Nations is directed by wealthy nations, the IMF and the
World Bank are controlled by the same interests, and the World Trade
Organization marches to the same drumbeat. Monbiot’s solution is to replace
the present economic institutions with a new banking system. Harking back
to John Maynard Keynes and his idea of an ‘International Clearing Union’,
Monbiot argues that international banking requires a new basic structure that
would provide a more just and equitable system by which nations could
engage in the economic system:

\begin{quotation}

Keynes’s system would, quite simply, maximize worldwide prosperity and
level the power of nations. The ICU would entail no forced liberalization, no
penal conditions on the poorest countries, no engineered opportunities for
predatory banks and multinational corporations, no squashing of democratic
consent. But the obvious question remains: how can the rich nations,
especially the US, be made to accept it?\textsuperscript{371}

\end{quotation}

Monbiot’s argument is that the debt of poorer countries to the rich is so large
that it outstrips the collective resources of the creditor nations. It is therefore
in the best interests of rich nations to engage in a new form of economic
practice. In a sense, ‘the poor owns the rich world’s banks’.\textsuperscript{372} Monbiot

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\textsuperscript{370} \textit{The Guardian}, April 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2017.

\textsuperscript{371} Michael Meacher, in \textit{The Guardian}, Friday 20\textsuperscript{th}, June 2003.

\textsuperscript{372} Ibid.

\end{footnotesize}
proposes further radical changes – replace the WTO with a Fair Trade Organization (FTO) and democratize the United Nations.

In an upcoming book, nominally titled *Out of the Wreckage*, Monbiot proposes more. Having documented so many of the ills of neoliberalism, Monbiot now argues for ways out of the present dilemma. A new political story is required, and one might argue, a new political theory, a large-scale philosophical and theoretical apparatus, that can confront the neoliberal story. In mainstream politics, this failure to produce a ‘new story’ is, to him, entirely obvious. The end of the left as a serious political force in the U.K., therefore, might be said to have happened at the moment of Blairism’s wholesale ingestion of Thatcherism. Corbyn is hardly the bearer of the left’s theoretical, or indeed political, hopes going forward into the future. The last convincing general ‘story’ from the centre and the left was, according to Monbiot, John Maynard Keynes ‘General Theory’:

> Outside of mainstream politics, there are thousands of new stories, which is part of the problem. There is a cacophony. No-one can hear any of them because everyone is shouting ... so it all becomes unintelligible. What I am trying to do is to pull out the best of these ideas which have been devised by other people ... some of which are total rubbish, some of which are pretty good, some of which are brilliant, finding the best ideas, and trying to weave those into a coherent political narrative ... I try to get us a little bit further along the road to writing that new story.\(^{373}\)

6. **Theory, the State and the Future**: *Preliminary Thoughts*

After this detailed review of some of the major state theorists of the last century, and having briefly glimpsed into the future of theorising about capitalism and the state, it must now be possible to set out some general conclusions that point to the future of state theory. Several preliminary remarks should help set the scene.

*First*, this book has not attempted to provide an exhaustive account of state theorising. That exacting task may well be beyond the scope of any single individual. Nonetheless, while I have chosen a singular path through state theorists, it is also a path many others have also trodden – the texts are hardly

\(^{373}\) George Monbiot, *Neoliberalism, Climate Change and Migration*, in conversation with Verso, to be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7MFJ4EFezQ, recovered on April 5th, 2017. There are, quite clearly, many others now writing about the future from the left. See, for example, Peter Frase, *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism*, Verso, New York, 2016.
obscure for those writing in the field. And given the exhaustive coverage these theorists have, in turn, given to the broader state-centred literature, there is a wide range of sources to choose from in developing a proposal for a theory of the future.

*Second*, it must be self-evident from all we read and understand, that, in spite of the utopian dreams of the right, and indeed, of the left of an earlier generation, the state has not withered away, but rather, has changed its structure and its purpose. It is hard to imagine, given the complexity of ‘late-late capitalism’, that any such society could function without something like a state. Even in Michael Albert’s post-capitalist utopia, a structure I have referred to as a ‘grey state’, must persist. The question of whether capitalism needs something like a state to survive seems self-evident from the numerous historical examples presented, the most dramatic in recent years being the fiscal meltdown of the U.S. economy in 2008, which led the government to invoke the massive involvement of the federal state.

*Third*, there is clearly, also, an obvious gap in state theory that many complain about, but no-one has been able adequately to fill. Part of this problem has been to do with the demise of the ‘master narrative’. With the death of Pierre Bourdieu in 2002, and with the earlier rise of the ‘New Philosophers’ in the late 1970s, a curse has been placed on all those who seek to create theories of everything, that try to explain how all states work, or how all knowledge works, or where the secret of modern economies might lie. It has thus been considered to be totalitarian even to attempt such a task, and thus theorists have hurried off to smaller, less ambitious, theoretical terrains.

*The problems of leftist state theory have not been a deterrent to theorists of the right*. An argument rarely completely understood by the left is that the right have taken theory very seriously, and they have done so since the 1960s, with the rise of Milton Friedman and Frederick Hayek, whose intellectual work has provided a general theory of everything. It has been celebrated and endorsed as a form of general explanation for all forms of human activity on a global scale. The ‘Master Narrative’ of the right has been superbly successful. The general theory of neoliberalism has prevailed, in spite of massive evidence suggesting that its lies, its systematic exploitation of workers, the environment, and, most fundamentally, its attack on democracy, are fundamental to its character. Thus, while the left have been worrying about the possible hegemony of a general theory, the rightist theory of the state and economy has flourished, and not just in the think tanks of the right, but in the practices and purposes of capitalist economies, and therefore in the daily lives of ordinary people, worldwide.
Elements of a State Theory of the Future

What, then, would an adequate theory of the state from the left require, as far as we can tell to date? I will briefly summarise what I take to be the essential elements of such an undertaking.

1. *The Necessity of History.* Bourdieu’s magisterial attempt to provide progressive forces with an adequate account of the origins of the state is a magnificent, though incomplete, achievement. The ambition of the work – to dig back to the 12th century, to examine documents from early French history, from China, Japan and Britain, and then to trace the very earliest sources of state activity - is breath-taking. It is also essential work if we are to understand what the origins of our present condition might be. But it remains, first and foremost, an account of France. Bourdieu frequently insisted that he was not engaged in theorizing at all, but in providing generally applicable methodological tools for others to use in specific contexts, cultures and histories. His context was France, and thus, much remains to be done by others to bring forward historical accounts of other societies. He was proposing, as always, a programme of research. Further, his account almost wilfully ignores everything else besides the symbolic. No-one could accuse Bourdieu of being naïve about social class. His master-work *Distinction* put paid, once and for all, to any claims that might be made that he failed to understand the role of economic hierarchy and economic exploitation. Nonetheless, his account of the genesis of the state infers an economic history rather than openly evoking that history. For the rest of us, much remains to be done. It is clear that any new research program will require work on a theory of historical complexity that few have, to date, been willing to undertake. There may indeed be general patterns undergirding the rise of capitalism, as many have already argued, but it is also, clear, at one and the same time, that each society requires a contingent and context-specific theory of history of the kind that Bourdieu has produced for France, however incompletely.

2. *Dealing with the Complexity of the State.* Not since Gramsci put pen to paper have we been able, with a straight face, to put forward the notion that the state is a simple instrument of capitalism. For political reasons, it might have suited early theorists to make such a blunt claim, but Gramsci’s theory of hegemony put to rest, once and for all, the idea that the use of brute force was a sufficient explanation to use to understand the power of the state. Poulantzas, with his extension of the Gramscian argument more self-consciously into the realms of political and ideological state activity, further opened the doors to this complexity. Hall, and his emphasis on the cultural
turn, offered a new way of understanding how the state can capture the political common sense of an era. Bourdieu’s work on symbolic capital further extends the range of theoretical tools available to us to understand what is at stake within the state, and how this set of problems might be confronted. If we are not willing to confront the modern state in its fully complex condition, then we will not be able to understand how it operates. Thus any adequate account of the state in the future must live side-by-side with this complexity. And the precise nature of this complexity can only be revealed by detailed research.

3. Facing the Complexity of the Citizenry. The problem of complexity does not end with the elaborate machinations of the state itself. Since the early days of Marxist theorizing, the working class has held centre stage in ruminations about the future. The dictatorship of the proletariat was still part of the central doctrine of the British Labour Party until the 1980s. But exploitation was never just about working men. The drastic exclusion of everybody else always meant from the start that Marxist theorising about politics, the state and the future was doomed to ignore most of the people it sought to implicate in its plans. At the present stage of capitalism, it is nothing short of absurd not to place the concerns of these ‘others’ at the centre of new theorizing. As George Monbiot comments, there is a cacophony of voices to be heard, not just from women and the women’s movement, not just from the various ethnic communities that have been excluded, not just from the LGBTQ communities, but also from a wide array of other communities never considered by Marxist arguments aimed solely towards the dictatorship of the proletariat. Issues surrounding the environment are now paramount to many on the left. The list of constituents and their concerns is substantial and complicated, and each sector has a series of demands that should reasonably be addressed in any future society that the left might contemplate. Thus any theory of the state attached to such hopes will need to develop a politics, not just of one sector or another, but a politics of the whole.

4. The Need for a Theory of Praxis. Marx famously reminded us that the point of philosophy is not merely to understand the world, but that the point is to change it. This quotation\(^3\) has been widely misused to mean that theory is beside the point, and that action is paramount. Marx clearly didn’t understand

\(^3\) ‘Philosophers have merely interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.’ From Theses on Feuerbach, (Marx-Engels Collected Works, Volume 5, pages 3-5) recovered from the Socialist Worker webpage at https://socialistworker.org/2013/03/26/praxis-makes-perfect on April 7th, 2017. (Column of Todd Chretien, March 26, 2013.) As Chretein rightly points out, the misuse of this quotation by activists is notorious.
praxis\textsuperscript{375} in this way, and the dialectic between theory and practice was central to his entire body of work, and to much of what followed from this beginning. Gramsci used the term, not merely as a smokescreen to avoid the censor’s pen, but also to speak to the dialectic that should exist continually between theoretical work and the work of experience.

From the start, Gramsci was far more interested in changing the material conditions for workers than he was in rewriting the Marxist philosophical lexicon. But as he struggled with the issues of workers’ power, socialism, and the possibility of a socialist revolution, not to mention the rise of fascism, he never failed to return to the realm of theory in order to make sense of what he was experiencing. Action on its own is rarely enough. Armchair theorizing is aimless if the purpose is to change the world. Again, in Poulantzas’s contribution to theories of the state, there is a continual restlessness, a relentless dialectical movement between high theory and the talk of political possibilities, especially in Greece where some of his family still lived, as well as in France, where he wrote and worked. Class struggle is never far away from his concerns. Bourdieu’s desperation in the 1990’s, and his almost frantic efforts to create a philosophical and theoretical alternative to neoliberalism through his extensive research, activism, and organizational efforts spoke to the same compulsion – to be active in the world in order to change it, but also, as a sociologist of the future, to provide ‘scientific’ accounts, as he saw it, of what was going on in a more general way, above the fray of everyday experience but in debate with it, to use a newly formulated ‘science’ in the service of political transformation.

What does this mean for a theory of the state in the future? Clearly political theories of the future abound, as Monbiot has usefully explained already. But clearly also what is needed is not just a ‘good story’, as Monbiot proposes, but a winning story, a story that combines the very disparate social publics – well beyond the traditional white, male proletariat – into a theory of the politics of the whole in a vision of the future. Thus a theory of praxis must get beyond the cacophony of voices and secure the common themes – equality, inclusion, justice – that can be at the heart of a new theory of the state, and a new theory of utopia. And this theory of the future must lead to the kind of widespread political action that is presently piecemeal, limited in

\textsuperscript{375} As will be familiar to most, praxis is traditionally a Greek term that refers to the process by which theory, ideas, lessons are turned into practice. The term was first discussed by Aristotle and Plato, and the theme re-occurs in the writings of Kant, Marx, and others in the Marxist tradition. Gramsci called Marxism the ‘philosophy of praxis’ to avoid the prison censors. In Marxist terms, the use of the word raises a series of issues that connect political theory with political action.
time and space, and lacking coherence.

5. The Fight to Understand and Capture the Common Sense. Is there still some common interest that might secure a common future? Stuart Hall has already brilliantly revealed for us the power of Thatcherism. In the wake of a failed Fordism, a Labourist strategy that had run out of money and that had lost the political will to live, Thatcher and her cronies took up the reigns, and began to deliver a new common sense, hopelessly inadequately, slowly, but with increasing momentum, to secure law and order, to get the rubbish collected, to have the trains run on time, to balance the budget, and to secure a new modernist strategy. A tiny little neo-colonial war in the Falkland Islands allowed perhaps the most unpopular Prime Minister in British history to stay in power and to bring about a partial revolution. Blairism took up the neoliberal baton and ran right into the branded, message-centred, media-savvy world of Alistair Campbell, and the managing of the public message for the evolving ‘New Labour’ party. That this party under Blair’s leadership, captured the common sense of the era is without doubt, and they did so by merging market capitalism with a changing vision of the state, all packaged together to form a wholly nutritious and digestible diet for the feeding of the British public. By doing this, they may have captured the common sense of the day, but the Labour Party, aware of its infection from the political right, was seriously undermined.

What is there, therefore, in the notion of a ‘common sense’ to be captured that is still worth fighting for? At one level, these elements of a common sense seem self-evident. Surely, one might reasonably propose, a majority of people want to live in a safe, stable and secure society, a stability founded on the basis of social justice? Was this not what Thatcher understood as the basic problem for Labour – their failure to secure basic services and stable social conditions? Instead, the Labour Party of the 1970s had delivered instability and social despair, continual strikes and a failure to deliver on health, wages and pensions. Is it not, therefore, a condition of any imagined advanced democratic society that there be good health care, a strong welfare net, a commitment to economic fairness, to gender equity, to ethnic inclusion, to religious liberty, to the separation of church and state, to support for gay rights and the rights of various communities of sexual identity? Is there always a common core of values that a majority of people might agree upon – stability, adequate health care, justice, free education – whatever the list might be? Do not these principles seem self-evident as the basis for any decent society? Clearly there are neoliberal solutions to all these problems that can be set against state-driven solutions, but here we are talking about methods of implementation, rather than fighting over
fundamental values. Is there, therefore, a common sense worth fighting for, and does the left have a strategy for securing this common sense and for meeting these ambitions? I am not suggesting that there is some simple list of universal conditions that all societies might agree upon, but that, rather, in all societies, it is possible to talk meaningfully about a common sense that it there to be captured, even if the precise elements of this common sense will vary dramatically, from the progressivism of the Scandinavian social democracies to the neo-conservative qualities to be found in the United States. The work for social theorists and for sociologists is to identify this common sense, to examine which strategies might best secure the practical implementation of these values, and to ask whether the state can serve to guarantee these rights. Can the left capture this common sense, and develop theories, policies and practices that reflect them? While a facile analysis of Trump is to dismiss him as a rabid right-winger, with xenophobic views, with a long-standing history of sexual predation, and a narcissistic self-obsession, it is worth remembering that his campaign, if campaign it can be called, was aimed towards populism, the securing of a 19th century world for working-class white males, and the women who still believed in that long-extinct world. Similarly, Bernie Sanders, the hope for most leftist aspirations in the 2016 U.S. presidential election before he was derailed by Democratic Party shenanigans, was running on a populist ticket of bringing the banks to account, making the rich pay more taxes, developing a stronger health care and pension system, and providing better and more secure jobs for all. There was a common sense worth fighting for, and it was there for everyone, whether from the left or right, to see.

6. Understanding the Hybridity of the Future. In Erik Olin Wright’s work on utopias, he discusses the challenges inherent in actually existing capitalism, and points out the obvious error of imagining that in any given society some untainted and complete form of capitalism exists by itself. For Wright, the traditional challenge to capitalism that socialism once provided has now gone. In its place, Wright does not imagine that all hope is lost, but instead wants to suggest that any hopes for progress lie in another direction, and that moving in that direction requires an understanding of the hybrid nature of advanced societies. Wright allows, as many on the left do not, that non-class elements will play a major role in any social developments of the future, thus going well beyond orthodox class-based theories of socialism. But then he introduces the notion of hybridity, claiming that in all known societies there exists an amalgam of socialist elements, along with capitalist structures, household economies, non-profit systems, gift-giving, economic exchange

systems and several other possible ways of doing business and structuring social life. Wright thus characterises modern societies as hybrid systems, in which we experience, on a daily basis, a multiple set of ways of managing the life-world of citizens. Whatever the dominant economic, political and ideological structures that might prevail, a huge number of people live largely outside the doxa. This means the basic elements of cooperative life are present in any given social formation. And this means that ‘social empowerment’, the political capacities of the general public, are always potentially available to deliver a way of life closer to socialism. Thus Wright sees the state as part of the future, and he also sees a role for the market. This hybridity is a concept which, for Wright, more accurately reflects the world as it is much better than any neoliberal vision of free market purity, or dreams of a sanitised socialist utopia. If socialism is a remote prospect, as he claims, we must deal with the world as it is, warts and all, socialist, collectivist and capitalist at one and the same time. And if Wright’s depiction of the present situation is accurate, then the challenge for theorists of the state in the future is to deal with the hybrid nature of the existing social world, and to examine this complexity for possibilities. In hybridity, Wright sees hope and potentialities. Our present story about the nature of the existing social structures is hopelessly incomplete, and an understanding that accounts for hybridity comes closer to the mark. And if this is so, there is, in Wright’s thinking, both the challenge of seeking to analyse a far more complex society than we imagined before, but also to sense in that future, the possibilities for movement forward that we might have overlooked by ignoring hybridity. And this will require a way of explaining how the state will play its role in future undertakings.

Thinking the Future

In the end, is a radical social democracy, such as can be found in Scandinavia, the best we can do in the present phase of capitalist development, as Naomi Klein proposes? Can capitalism be regulated and controlled in order to meet the needs embodied in the best common sense of the day? Klein’s argument is that a mixed economy is the best possible alternative available to us in the present conditions. This means securing health, education, welfare and civil rights under the umbrella of the state, while other sectors of society operate in a (presumably regulated) free market. While there are many things to value in Scandinavia, have the ‘purer’ thoughts of a socialism beyond capitalism now disappeared? Not for everyone. Klein has been routinely criticised from the left for not proposing a social system beyond capitalism, and seeming to suggest that if we had a better, kinder, more fully regulated, market system,
then all would be well. Those committed to the overthrow of capitalism are hardly likely to be appeased by such theories of rapprochement. But if that is so, it remains for those on the most progressive edge of the left to suggest what this better world might look like, and how we might get there. In the meantime, the major discussions of the future are likely to centre on the ‘actually existing societies’ of Erik Olin Wright and Naomi Klein.

But then history changes things against the odds. Changes that did not seem possible – the end of fascism in Europe, the end of apartheid, the overthrow of the Pinochet régime – a long list of impossible changes, changes against the odds, changes against violent and repressive régimes, changes for the better, progressive changes – seem to occur all the time. There is a restlessness in people, usually incoherent and unrealized, to seek a different and better world to inhabit, even if the precise details of that future are unclear. At the end of Gindin’s review of Klein’s This Changes Everything, Gindin comments:

At the end of her book, Klein is about to interview the youthful head of Syriza, the radical Greek party now on the brink of taking power. She asks a Greek comrade what she should ask him, and the person answers: “Ask him: When history knocked on your door, did you answer?” As Klein concludes, “That’s a good question for all of us.”

And perhaps a poet, a seer of the future, ought to have the last word:

History says don’t hope
This side of the grave
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.

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377 See ‘When History Knocks’, in Jacobin, 12.30, 2014, a review by Sam Gindin of Klein’s This changes everything: capitalism vs. the climate. New York, 2014, Simon and Schuster. The gist of the article is sympathetic, but suggests that Klein does not go far enough.
