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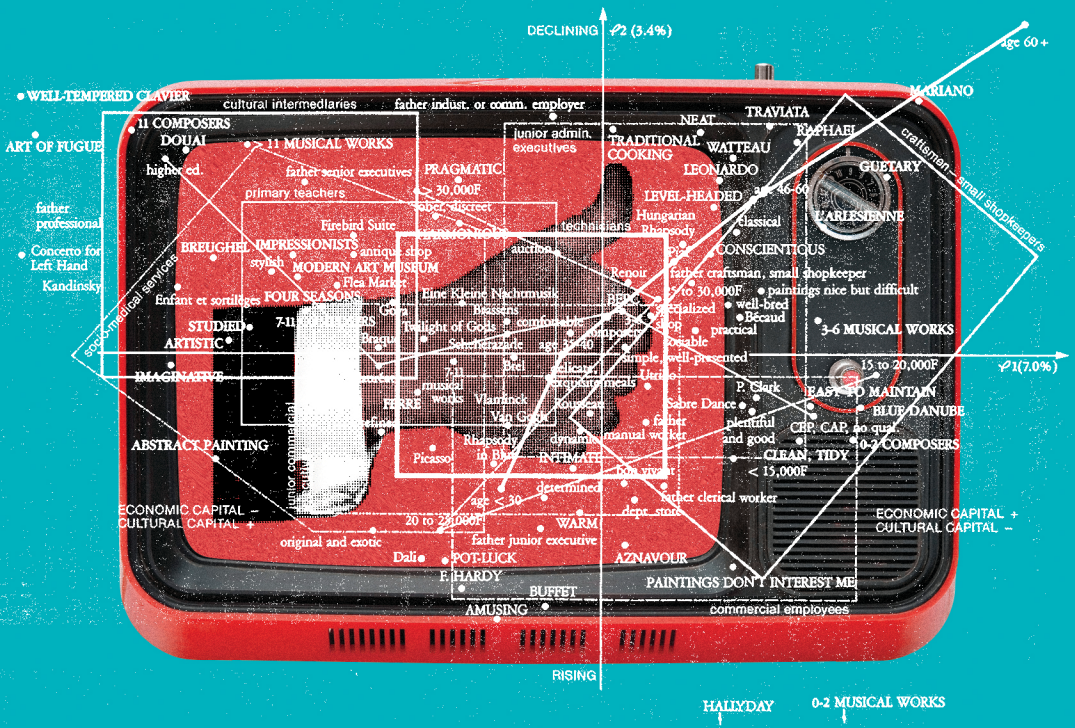
Catalyst



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Editorial

This issue of *Catalyst* is dominated by two broad themes: the role of symbols and media in modern capitalism, and political transitions in the Global South.

We open with a wide-ranging interview with Robert McChesney, perhaps the most important scholar of the media today, on the significance of the scandal around Facebook and Cambridge Analytica. These two firms, a social media behemoth and a secretive political-consulting firm, recently ignited controversy. At issue was Cambridge Analytica's acquisition of millions of Facebook users' private data, which they then used to target voters on behalf of political campaigns. The scandal opened a window to the deep ties between media firms, political elites, and the internet, and raised profound questions about how access to information is not only becoming centralized, but also tied to a previously unimaginable surveillance apparatus.

The link between class and symbolic production is also at stake in this issue's longest segment, which is a far-reaching debate on Pierre Bourdieu's political theory. In *Catalyst* 1, no. 2, we published

Dylan Riley's critique of Bourdieu's account of class and power. Riley suggested that even while Bourdieu is regarded as an alternative to Marx's class theory, in fact the former's account of class is internally inconsistent and lacks empirical warrant. We now publish two responses to Riley, one from George Steinmetz and Johan Heilbron, two leading exponents of Bourdieusian theory, and another from sociologist Michael Burawoy.

At the heart of this debate is the role of culture, or symbolic struggles, in the constitutions of class. Whereas Riley deems Bourdieu's valorization of culture and symbolic production to be detrimental to a viable class theory, Steinmenz and Heilbron view it as necessary to any viable account of class. Indeed, they see little of value in Riley, dismissing his article as a romantic reassertion of Marxist economism. Michael Burawoy, on the other hand, accepts much of Riley's argument. Burawoy agrees that Riley has located genuine weaknesses in Bourdieu, but while he acknowledges much of the critique, he urges that there is still much that is valuable in the French sociologist's work. Riley's careful and very elaborate response takes on his critics arguments point by point; in so doing, not only does he offer a model of intellectual engagement, but also a powerful reassertion of Marxist class theory. Taken together, the pieces in this segment constitute one of the most important recent debates in class theory, and certainly the fiercest exchange between exponents of the Marxist and Bourdieusian approaches.

Turning now to how class struggles are playing out in the world, we have two essays analyzing political transitions in China and South Africa. Ho-fung Hung tells us what to make of changes in the Chinese constitution, which have effectively made the current leader, Xi Jinping, president for life. As he observes, this move confirms that the claims of mainstream commentators, who predicted that market liberalization would hothouse political liberalism, were fantasies. Instead, the tightening of the authoritarian noose in China is a direct consequence of its integration into the global economy.

Michael Smith's essay on South Africa is a useful coda to the essay we published in *Catalyst* 1, no. 2 by Sam Ashman, Zach Levinson, and Trevor Ngwane. In that earlier article, the authors expose the looming crisis faced by Jacob Zuma's African National Congress (ANC). Smith analyzes the recent presidential transition from Zuma to Cyril Ramaphosa. Once the leader of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, Ramaphosa would seem to be the last chance for the ANC to revive its political legitimacy. But as Smith observes, its steady implosion is matched by the continued paralysis of the South African left. Even while Ramaphosa scrambles to restore his party's political fortunes, despite his continued embrace of austerity and neoliberalism, its rivals to the Left are unable to hasten its demise.

Also centered around the Global South, Aruna Krishnamurthy reviews a recent book on the value of postcolonial theory to Victorian literature. One of the strategies of the field in recent years has been to absorb literary figures who one might never associate with postcolonial studies. In this case, the novelist is George Eliot. In *The Postcolonial Eliot*, Oliver Lovesey makes the case that Eliot's work can be fruitfully analyzed through the prism of postcolonial theory. Lovesey builds his case by employing a "contrapuntal reading," pioneered by Edward Said in his analysis of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. But as Krishnamurthy argues, the attempt is not convincing. Eliot is better understood in the manner advocated by Raymond Williams, as an advocate of the English laboring classes. The failure reveals the pitfalls of an approach, and a field, that insists on seeing everything through the prism of empire, suppressing obvious dynamics of class. ⊬

In March 2018, a major crisis erupted around an obscure political consulting firm called Cambridge Analytica. It was discovered that the firm had acquired the private data of millions of Facebook users and was putting it to the service of its clients in political campaigns. The revelations attracted attention in part because the company is owned by a conservative political donor, Robert Mercer, but more importantly, because it raised important questions about privacy and surveillance on the internet. And this in turn has profound implications about the place of the media in contemporary capitalism. We talked to leading media scholar Robert McChesney about these and related issues.

BETWEEN CAMBRIDGE & PALO ALTO

ROBERT W. MCCHESNEY

How has the Cambridge Analytica scandal been described in the media? And what do you think of how it's being framed?

The coverage itself has not been bad, what there's been of it. But I think the really striking thing about that story is that the crucial issues it raised have fallen to the bottom of the ocean. That's the interesting question. Why does this story, which ought to be triggering the same sort of public debate that the Watergate scandal triggered about money in politics, and the defeat in the Vietnam War triggered about the role of the CIA in American life in the 1970s, fall out of view? Why are we getting nothing like that sort of response to a scandal that's, I think, of equal or similar magnitude?

Clearly what it's pointing to is the extremely close connection between commercial media, politics, and our everyday lives.

Absolutely. It demonstrates how deeply entrenched the largest internet companies and their surveillance model is with the profit system. They're just in the bone marrow of modern capitalism — of our modern political economy. To go after that is basically going after the whole system, in a way. It would require that sort of organizing campaign.

Or to put it in terms of media analysis: no significant economic interests wish to open up critical public examination of the surveillance model of capitalism, so that means none of our political establishment — Republicans or Democrats — has any incentive to go there. Those few journalists who remain have little to work with from the official sources they rely upon, so the matter dies. It is no longer "news."

The Cambridge Analytica story initially got a significant amount of coverage from our "liberal news media," but then they pretty much dropped it, for these reasons. In addition, the story did not conform to the Russia obsession, especially at MSNBC. When they realized that this was something that was being done by a traditional capitalist concern, bankrolled by a traditional American right-wing, hedge-fund billionaire named Robert Mercer, it became a non-story. It ceased to matter, even though Mercer was bankrolling a good chunk of Trump's whole campaign.

Well, what we've seen so far of the revelations regarding Russian interference and the magnitude of Russian malfeasance seems to be infinitesimally small, almost trivial, compared to this.

No question about it. Cambridge Analytica is a very serious issue. I mean, not just about elections, but about political culture and social life in general, what that suggests and gets at, what's being done, and what's capable of being done. The Russian stuff, it may have had influence, and there is little doubt that an ethical sleazeball like Trump has no problem peddling influence to other ethical sleazeballs to enrich himself. But as far as the Russians actually stealing the outcome of the election itself? We don't know exactly. It seems blown out of proportion.

But here's the other irony. Every day we hear about Russian interference in the American elections, and how it was and is an obscene act of intervention into another nation's affairs that no genuine self-respecting democracy would ever pursue or countenance. Yet we never hear anything critical of US meddling in numerous other nations' elections and political systems as we speak. You'll see in the same "liberal media" reports about how the US is trying to make sure the internationally monitored Venezuelan election gets canceled or boycotted, and the results dismissed if our side doesn't win, or how we're trying to undermine the economy of Venezuela to make the country uninhabitable, so the existing system cannot survive. And the US role in all this is downplayed as inconsequential or even a benevolent reflection of how much the United States embraces democratic values and the rule of law! Then we go off on Russia for doing essentially 1/1000th of that to us. It's really difficult to take seriously when you look at it that way.

THE RISE OF THE SURVEILLANCE MODEL

Going back to the Cambridge Analytica scandal: in your analysis of this event, at the heart of it all is the commercial principle driving our media system. This is of course what's left out of the mainstream accounts of it. Could you lay out where you think the connections are between the commercialization of media and the way in which Facebook has now been harnessed to these very worrying political ends?

Well, one way to understand this is by looking back a bit. *Catalyst* readers under the age of forty probably won't know this, but when the internet came along in the 1990s, it was held up, ironically enough, as a place where you could have anonymity if you so desired. There was the famous cartoon in the *New Yorker* that nobody knows if you're a dog on the internet. It shows a dog at a keyboard. Because you couldn't

be tracked. You could do whatever you wanted. So you didn't know who you were dealing with online because everyone was anonymous.

Most of the people who designed the internet didn't want it to be a commercial medium, and that's why they made it that way. The problem with that for capitalism was that it didn't make for a very successful commercial model. In the 1990s, there was endless talk of locating the "killer app," the digital goose that would lay the golden eggs. Capitalists knew the internet was changing everything, but it seemed resistant to commercial exploitation. By the middle of the 1990s, Madison Avenue and the corporate community realized that if they were going to really have the internet be the nervous system of modern society, they had to make it advertiser friendly, they had to make it profit friendly. They had to commercialize it, and the crucial thing to doing that was introducing the capacity and the protocols for surveillance, knowing who exactly is online, everything about them. That began in earnest in the late 1990s and changed the entire logic of the internet — turned it on its head in many respects.

Why, so early on, was it understood that the key to turning the internet into a commercial medium would be this tracking and surveillance capacity?

The advertisers were the first ones who were on top of this. They were the ones who drove it initially. It was because they understood that no one will voluntarily watch or listen to or read an advertisement if they can avoid it, unless they are really interested in the product or something. But, typically, they will try to ignore it. So a traditional advertising model is: you buy a lot of ads and pummel people over the head with your ad until they can't forget it, and hopefully you also get your target audience.

Well, the internet was proving to be a nightmare for that model, because people would click away and they just wouldn't watch an ad. On top of that, because of the anonymity, you had no way of knowing

who was viewing the ad, so all the demographic work you had done to find your target audience in television and radio and newspapers and magazines — you didn't even have that to work with. You didn't know who was watching your ad, and you didn't know if they were even going to watch it. They probably wouldn't; no rational person would. Only a moron would click a banner ad. So they were freaking out and were desperate to find a solution. How do you find a way to get your ads to the right demographic? We've got to have a way to pummel people with our messages. And deep in the thinking was the prospective upside: here was a technology that conceivably could give corporations infinitely more power over consumers, not simply to advertise products, but to make sales. But that required wrestling away people's ability to maintain their privacy, and doing so without their awareness of what was being done to them.

This movement was led, appropriately enough, by Procter & Gamble. The key was to find a way of tracking people's internet activity so you could know who they were, where they were, and you could collect data on them. It didn't begin all at once. It wasn't an overnight 180-degree turn, but that process was underway by the mid-nineties, and then it was expanded to where we are today over the next decade.

But the initial design was for the internet not to be a commercial medium, so that means that its transformation towards this model required some sort of government intervention and government action, right?

Absolutely. The internet is a testament to public spending, if not socialism. The private sector would have never developed the internet or the digital revolution on its own, because there was no apparent way to make profits off of it for decades.

This history has largely disappeared from memory. The internet was started by the combination of the Pentagon and military interests that bankrolled it for the most part, and a handful of major research

universities — where much of the research was done by graduate students and young professors in the '60s and '70s and '80s, who were often countercultural people. They were hippies. I knew some of these people in the '70s. It was a marriage of these two communities, and it was driven by noncommercial principles.

For the military, the idea was that this was going to be part of our national-security network that would protect us from an attack by the Soviets or our enemies, if they wanted to take down our communications. The internet didn't have a central hub, unlike the telephone system, so if the Russians, or the Soviets, were to drop a bomb, there was no place they could drop it and wipe out all internet communication. The internet naturally circumvented any blockages; that was their incentive to do it.

The military clearly was always open to the idea of surveillance, as that would enhance its vision of national security, but that was not really on the table or the driving force prior to the '90s. There was no driving interest coming from the Pentagon, CIA, and NSA to commercialize cyberspace. Indeed, it was illegal to use the internet for commercial purposes before 1992.

The incentive on the side of the hippies and the scientists was, here was this revolutionary technology which can inexpensively connect everyone in the world. It sounds like pop culture blarney today, but there's an element of truth to it too. That was certainly a romantic, idealistic, and powerful vision that would drive people to say, "This is an important thing to work on."

Neither vision had much room for the idea that people should make money off of this, nor did advertising rise to take it seriously. In fact, when Marc Andreessen started Netscape, which he basically lifted from the University of Illinois where it was worked on, he found this to be a real problem.

You should tell our readers what Netscape is – most of them probably have never encountered it.

Oh, right. Netscape was the first commercial browser and it came along in the early '90s, right when the world wide web began to make the internet a mass medium for the first time. Marc Andreessen was a young computer scientist from Illinois who started the company, basically taking the software that had been developed at Illinois, not for commercial reasons, and he commercialized it and made a fortune on it.

Anyway, he said in an interview later that the biggest problem he faced in that period — and that other people like him faced — was there was such abject hostility to any form of commercialism on the internet. He called it a militantly egalitarian space. I remember the first time I went online in the early '90s, and if you even went so far as to say, "Hey, I've got a bicycle for sale. I want to sell it for $50," in some chatroom, you'd get irate emails flaming you, like, "Hey, get out of here with that crap, man. This is the internet, man. We don't do that here. Go buy an ad in the newspaper if you want to sell your junk. This is not a commercial space."

THE DEMOCRATS PRIVATIZE THE INTERNET

What you're saying, then, is that it's during the Clinton administration that the key changes are made to open it up to being overtaken by these profit motives.

Yeah, the Clinton administration's right in the middle of everything. The modern Democratic Party — as represented by the Clintons and Barack Obama — they were at the center of this. They were not just riding along in the caboose. They were driving the process.

It didn't come about in one stroke. One of the reasons why this transition really has elicited little attention by scholars, and certainly little in the public mind — most people are unaware of this history—is that there wasn't one piece of legislation like there have been in other technologies, where there's a whole battle over a decisive piece of

legislation. So, for example, the enabling of online surveillance was never done in an act of Congress. There was never a real debate over whether we want to have advertising on the internet, whether we want to let internet service providers and internet companies monitor people surreptitiously in everything they do and know all about you.

There was never a bill passed to authorize that. It was done several layers away from any public review whatsoever, where the public would have any idea, and it had virtually no press coverage, accordingly. So 99 percent of Americans had no idea this was going on. It was really a debate limited to internet engineers and commercial interests who were pushing it, in scientific and technical venues, not in public forums. Everything was done at the administration level or in semigovernmental venues authorized by the government.

If there was a single piece of legislation that stood out, it was the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which in theory and in principle was supposed to amend the traditional communications law that was passed in 1934 for the regulation of radio and television and telephony. It was supposed to upgrade the 1934 law in view of the digital revolution. The basic idea was that with the impending digital revolution, the traditional media would all become digital, so the distinctions between phone companies and cable companies, music companies and radio stations, film studios and television, would all disappear. Once everyone's using the same digital technology, everyone does everything, and therefore the traditional regulations for different media sectors no longer held. You needed a new law that basically recognized the new technological world we're in, and encompassed all of them.

The immediate reason why the 1996 law was important for the internet was that it changed ownership regulations. Limiting the number of government-granted monopoly licensees a single firm could have for radio or television broadcasting or cable and telephone systems was probably the strongest public-interest component in US communication law in the twentieth century. The new digital argument basically said that these traditional ownership restrictions should no longer

apply, because if you limit ownership in one sector and don't limit in the other, then firms in the regulated sector could not compete with firms in the less-regulated or unregulated sector. In some areas, like radio broadcasting and telecommunication, ownership restrictions were loosened immediately, and in others it was regarded as just a matter of time until the digital revolution made it necessary.

The theory was that this would lead to a massive wave of competition across the entire communications sector, because suddenly the phone companies would be doing cable, they'd me making pictures and TV, they'd be publishing books. I mean, everyone would be doing everything and any company making profits in communication would suddenly face strong competition on every front. It would be a Wild West, with consumers and society as a whole the ultimate victors.

Basically, it's reducing the barriers to entry across sectors simultaneously.

Exactly. That's exactly right. And in so doing, it was supposed to welcome new players into the market, which would unleash a golden age of competitive investment and competition.

Put that way, it seems like a reasonable proposition. But in the real world of US capitalism, the corporate lobbying over the terms of the new law was of mythic, virtually unprecedented, proportions between 1991 and 1996. The corporate lobbyists who wrote the law — or later helped the regulators "interpret" it — had no interest in creating more competitive markets; that would have been a nightmare for them. Their ambition pure and simple was to create more monopoly power for themselves while reducing any pesky public-interest regulations that might impede profitability

So, the relaxation of ownership limits has had the ironic intended effect of leading to a huge concentration of market power. Telecommunications — meaning cable and satellite TV systems, telephone companies, ISPs — is the most striking example. Prior to 1996 there

were strong limits against cross-ownership and mergers in these sectors since they were all based on government-granted monopoly licenses. The law supposed that once phone companies could enter the cable TV business and vice versa, a golden age of competition would ensue. But the exact opposite happened as these huge companies did not blindly enter new markets to launch a competitive bloodbath; instead, they took advantage of the new relaxed ownership rules to merge and gobble each other up.

So it was that in 1996 there were nearly twenty major telecommunication companies, almost all ranking in the top half of the Fortune 500. Today, three companies—AT&T, Comcast, and Verizon, all among the very largest US firms—along with another half-dozen or so somewhat smaller firms, dominate cell phones, ISPs, cable, and satellite television. They operate much more like a cartel than a traditional oligopolistic market.

But what does this have to do with the internet giants we always hear about like Apple and Facebook and Google?

There is an important distinction between the "ISP cartel" that I just described of AT&T, Comcast, and Verizon, and the firms you just mentioned. The former are primarily US firms and make their monopoly by using US government monopoly licenses to have a cartel bottleneck over cell phones and internet access. These are the firms that are attempting to eliminate "net neutrality," which we will talk about later. These firms want to use their control over cable, satellite, and cell phones to effectively privatize the internet. That is what net neutrality is all about. These firms are government-created monopolies and parasites pure and simple. Because of their political power, the US has the most expensive cell phones and internet access in the world and slower, crappier service than most European and Asian nations.

The great Internet monopolies of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google (Alphabet), and Microsoft are different. They are global firms and do

not depend upon government licenses for the market power. At the same time, they have extremely close relations with the US government and much of their work relies upon research and innovations first developed under military auspices. In just two decades, these five firms have conquered capitalism in an unprecedented manner. If you look at the largest companies in America today in terms of market value, the top five companies in the United States and the world in terms of market value are, in no particular order, Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Google, and Facebook. They're the top five companies in the world in terms of market value. It's astonishing what a dominant role they play. They blow everyone out of the water and they are growing at breakneck speed.

I think that ten of the top twenty-four corporations in the US are internet companies, and fifteen of the top forty. The number of internet firms drops off sharply once you get past the top forty. There is not much of a middle class or even upper middle class in digital capitalism.

There are a lot of concerns about the power these five internet behemoths have and will have going forward, and fundamental political questions that must be faced head on. But the concerns and solutions are somewhat different from those regarding the "ISP cartel."

THE STATE-MEDIA COMPLEX

What that means is that what started out as a radically decentralized and almost impossible to monitor form of communication, within a few short years, became incredibly centralized, where all the information was passing through just a very small number of hands.

Yeah. That's exactly right. And these companies then undertake this very close surveillance, which then becomes available to the highest bidder for commercial purposes.

What does this do to the original two ambitions of the scientific community behind the internet, anonymity and better dissemination of information?

Well anonymity, or, to use more familiar parlance, privacy, is all but gone. Cell phones, for example, are better thought of as tracking devices. But the issue with dissemination is very important too, because, alongside this centralization of control there is also the fact that journalism itself is dying. The internet hasn't caused its death, but it has accelerated it, and eliminated any hope for a successful commercial news media system that can serve the information needs of the entire population.

The roots of its decline stretch back decades. For the first hundred or so years in American history, newspapers were heavily subsidized by the federal government, in order to encourage a rich array of news media. No one at that time thought the profit motive operating in the "free" market alone would be sufficient to provide the caliber of news media the constitution required. This was done primarily through free or nominal distribution of newspapers by the post office — almost all newspapers were distributed by post in the early republic — and also by printing contracts handed out with the explicit intent to help support different newspapers, by branches of government. In combination, the annual government subsidy of journalism as a percentage of GDP in the 1840s would be worth around $35 billion in today's economy.

By the late nineteenth century, the commercial system consolidated whereby advertising provided the lion's share of the revenues, and the state subsidies declined in importance and, in many cases, disappeared. Publishing newspapers, building journalism empires, began to generate massive fortunes while continuing to provide owners with immense political power. This is the context in which professional journalism — purportedly nonpartisan, opinion-free, politically neutral and fact-obsessed — was spawned in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

So, what does the internet have to do with this? Where is the crisis in journalism you talk about?

The basic problem is that the giant internet companies — especially Facebook and Google — are taking away the advertising money that would've traditionally gone to some newspaper or journalism-producing entity. But Facebook and Google aren't using this money to invest in more journalists or news reporting.

Why did this happen? The reason has to do with the end of anonymity, the surveillance ability. Initially when the internet came along, most newspapers and television stations thought, "Well, we'll go online, and we'll just simply do what we've always done online. People will buy ads on the *New York Times* website because people will come to our website to read *New York Times* articles and they'll look at the ads, just like they did with our print edition. We might not make quite as much money on our online ads, but our costs will go way down because we don't have to print up copies and distribute them. So it'll be a wash, and we can still be a lucrative company doing commercial journalism." The same can be said for the *Washington Post* or any other news medium.

This looked like the transition, say, in the year 2000, that we would slowly be seeing. It wasn't clear we would lose commercial journalism. But what happened with the surveillance model is that no one buys ads on a website. You don't go to the *New York Times* and say, "Hey, I want to buy an ad," and hope and pray my target audience comes and looks at your website and sees my ad. Instead, you go to Google or Facebook or AOL, and you say, "Hey, I want to reach every American male in this income group between the age of 30 and 34 who might be interested in buying a new car in the next three months," and AOL will locate every one of those men, wherever they are online, and your ad will appear on whatever website they go to, usually straight away. They will find them.

That means the content producers, in this case the news media, don't get a cut anymore. Those advertising dollars used to subsidize most of their work. Now, if they do get an ad on your site, they get

much less for it, and they only get it for those users who are in the target audience of the person placing the ad, not everyone who goes to their site. If you and I were to go to the same site, we'd get different ads, probably, working for different products. The amount of money that the actual website gets is infinitesimal compared to what it would be if they got the whole amount, like in the good old days.

The commercial model's gone, which is why journalism's dying, why there are very few working journalists left. No rational capitalist is investing in journalism because of its profit potential. To the extent they invest, it tends usually be some hedge-fund douchebags buying dying media and stripping them for parts, or some billionaire like Jeff Bezos buying the *Washington Post* or Sheldon Adelson buying the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, always at fire-sale prices. The point of the exercise in these instances is to use the newspaper to shape the broader political narrative to the owner's liking, with very few other voices in opposition. That is hardly a promising development for an open society.

It used to be twenty-five years ago that if there was a major news story, you'd have reporters from the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *LA Times*, the *Atlanta News* covering the story, whatever it might be, in national or international politics. Today, it's the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* — more or less, that's it — who are paid reporters. A generation ago, state capitals and city halls were covered with reporters from different media; today the newsrooms in these buildings look like ghost towns. There's hardly anyone in the game. The game is pretty much over.

It is elementary democratic theory that a self-governing society cannot exist without a credible independent news media. That point should be shouted from the mountaintops because it is the reality we are entering. This has two immediate consequences worth mentioning. First, we see an increasing problem with a younger generation that is more sympathetic to progressive values and socialist politics than any in my lifetime, but which is woefully uninformed and uneducated

on basics of how the nation and world function economically and politically. Second, without a credible journalism that people can use as a basis for understanding and debate, it opens the door wide for a rejection of any news one does not like as "fake news." This is Trump's strategy, and it would have been absurd twenty-five years ago. Now it finds a population that has no reason to respect news media any more than Trump does.

But wait, Bob, you along with Noam Chomsky, Ed Herman, and the people at FAIR have been writing detailed studies for years revealing how the traditional mainstream news media served to advance the interests of the powerful and undermine popular democracy. Now you are telling me they are our necessary friends and allies?

Not quite, though I see the irony. While the commercial professional news system was deeply flawed, at its peak it had positive elements — like having large staffs of reporters covering communities they live in — and aspects of it are dearly missed. There are almost no foreign correspondents left reporting on the world from locales across the world, for example. With the gutting of newsrooms, what has happened is that the worst problems of the commercial system are magnified — like the reliance upon corporate and government spin — and the desperation for money has led to all sorts of corruption in journalism practices that we have not seen for a century. Again, it opens the door to thinking that all news is fake news.

So on the one hand you have this incredible centralization of information, and on the other, the slow death of journalism. It sounds Orwellian.

Exactly. The surveillance system is already being used for very insidious political ends. You can now acquire comprehensive information about large numbers of people — what their views are, what they're

interested in, what sort of appeals to them would be effective and what sort would not. This gives politicians a tremendous amount of power to cherry-pick propagandistic messages successfully and send them to people where it's really going to work.

The Obama campaign did this extensively in his 2012 reelection. They used cutting-edge data collection to break down voters, target specific messages to particular groups, etc. It was purely a marketing campaign. It was astonishingly effective, and the genius of it was, because all of the messages were targeted to individual people online, they were not really recognized by news media or the broader political culture. So even though Obama was far less popular in 2012 than he had been in 2008, the sophisticated tools his campaign developed allowed them to raise far more money online by constantly tweaking and individualizing the language in messages to supporters. Same thing for get-out-the-vote pleas.

The irony of the 2012 campaign was that it was the first time that the political parties were in front of the advertising people. The people who left the Obama campaign then went to Madison Avenue and went to corporate America and Silicon Valley to say, "Hey, this is how you really can do it now. We've learned how to target people. Obama's figured it out."

So you are describing a deeper phenomenon that's now taking root, which is that political parties see their voters as a demographic which they try to manage, just the same way that corporations try to manage market perceptions. Voters are part of a marketing ploy, rather than a component of a democratic culture.

Exactly. It is a long-term phenomenon but surveillance digital technologies have enhanced its power by orders of magnitude. So in 2012, Obama did wonders with this approach in galvanizing his supporters and shaking them down for contributions. It only took another election cycle for these technologies to turn to the dark side: instead of

trying to locate and cultivate potential supporters, use the power of this technology to demonize your opponent and undermine support for your opponent. This has proven to be the most frightening development by far.

You mean like the negative political TV ads and stuff like that?

It is actually much worse, because with negative TV ads lots of people will see them who are not sympathetic to the creator of the ad and will provide pushback, plus it will be possible to identify the message as a paid ad, which automatically undermines its credibility.
What is happening now — and this is what "fake news" really draws from — is a process called "push polling" which is technically illegal to do. It is considered the poison gas warfare of political campaigns.

Push polling refers to, when you really want to take out your opponent in a campaign, you call up voters who support that candidate and you claim you're a pollster, and you say, "Well, would you still support Senator Jones if you knew that he was arrested on charges of pedophilia four times in the last two years?" And people who were Senator Jones supporters would go, "Well, no, of course not. I had no idea." And you know, it's completely toxic. It's just a lie. You make up some story to trash your opponent. It's illegal, so it is now done only rarely and has to be done with layers of deniability between the push polling and the candidate who benefits by it. Evidence suggests it can be incredibly effective if done well.

Well, that's what fake news is. That's what Cambridge Analytica does. Instead of being positive messages, lies you tell about your candidate to the prospective voters, you go out and you tell negative messages that are very powerful, targeted to the supporters of your opponent, as well as gin-up enthusiasm for your own candidate by the die-hard supporters. That's what fake news is, and that's what Cambridge Analytica does. You can just find stuff that will have traction with people, and it will undermine the support they'll have. It

is truly putting poison in the political atmosphere, and it can thrive because actual journalism has shriveled up. This sort of fake news is exponentially more powerful than push polling, because it can surgically reach millions of people, and it is not at present effectively subject to criminal prosecution.

Continuing with the reference to Orwell, we can imagine how the threat goes even deeper, right, to democratic freedoms?

Yes. That's what we really need to start thinking about. It's not just advertisers or political candidates who have access to all this data. The military also has access to all the data these companies generate, pretty much at will. They work together to get that data, and they can use it for their surveillance. And this is terrifying because we're at a point now where our military system's completely off-limits to political control. There's really no check on it in Congress whatsoever.

Right, all you have to say is the two magic words, "national security," and everyone scatters.

That's right. I mean, there is this great line from a Pentagon official some time back when he confessed that they have to do their hardest lobbying when they want to get rid of a program, not when they want to add one, because the impetus in Congress is always to add more, just more, because nobody wants to be the guy who cut military spending.

The point is that militarism and democracy is a contradiction. This isn't even a controversial point. This is a core of democratic theory. Even the framers of the American constitution understood that. They certainly weren't democrats in many respects, but this is one thing you have to commend them on. They were obsessed with limiting the possibility of militarism. Even people like Madison, Jefferson, George Washington, or Alexander Hamilton — you find them making all sorts of warnings about the threat of permanent war and militarism to freedom,

to a free society; how it induces propaganda and corruption, and how democracy can't survive that.

But here we are, living in a permanent warfare security state that's been expanding for more than seventy years. One of the great promises of the internet, you might remember — it lasted about three weeks! — was that it was going to inhibit all these crazy wars that the United States gets into. It was going to enlighten people as to what the military was doing, it was going to give people power to rein in the military, it was going to give people around the world a chance to communicate directly with us that wouldn't be filtered by elites, and it would be a great victory for peace and for a peaceful world.

Well, instead what we have now is that the military has colonized the internet. If you were to go to the Pentagon today, the Pentagon breaks the world down into theaters. There's the sub-Saharan Africa theater, there's the Western Europe theater, there's the South Asian theater, there's the East Asian theater, the South American theater. Well, there's also a cyber theater. They treat the internet as a continent of the world that they regard as a place they have to conquer and control. They do that in conjunction with the big five internet corporations, who get ample contracts working with them on this — they're joined at the hip on this. They are all largely impervious to political accountability in our "democracy." It is a fundamental contradiction that will loom large over the twenty-first century.

THE ROAD TO REFORM

Well, what this leads naturally to is the issue of possible reforms, and where to go from here – what can both get the surveillance state off our backs, but also potentially create a space once again for a revived news media. Let's start with the short-term. Let's say the next presidential election or the next two presidential elections: what might be some achievable short-term reforms that could put us back on the right track?

I think the short term and medium-term are pretty much the same. What's accomplishable is different in each of them. There are three basic areas we've got to work on.

First of all, we've got to come up with ways to have funding for independent, competitive, nonprofit and noncommercial journalism. Not state controlled, but real revenues that can pay for people to do good journalism in a competitive environment, but a noncommercial one. We've learned the hard way that advertising and journalism do not mix, and profits and journalism are a no-go. That's already been established by the market. I have championed the plan first developed by Dean Baker, which calls for every American over eighteen to have the right to allocate $200 of government money to the nonprofit and noncommercial news medium of their choice. Massive government subsidy (or public investment) so we can have paid reporters in independent competing newsrooms; no government control over the journalism.

In the United States, we've gotten nowhere on that issue to speak of, although we're trying. Sometimes, the fight for funding for public broadcasting or community broadcasting is a stand-in. It's the best we can do to keep the principle alive of public funding. But they have a long way to go. The collapse of the commercial journalism model is a global phenomenon and people are wrestling with the issue worldwide. I suspect we will see breakthroughs overseas before we do in the United States. At any rate, an effective journalism system is sine qua non for a democratic society and this issue must be aggressively pursued.

The good news for activism in this area is that — unlike media reform work in the 1990s, by comparison — since capitalists have pretty much abandoned the field of journalism, there is no powerful profit-generating industry that opposes reform like the Baker plan because it threatens their modus operandi. The main opposition now comes from the political right, which has long understood that an informed and engaged citizenry is their mortal enemy.

The neoliberal crowd encourages and celebrates the collapse of journalism. A world of fake news — which they generate in tsunami proportions — is a world they can easily dominate and conquer. It is a world that gives us Trump, and Trump's policies.

OK, is there anything that is actually in play?

Yes, there is. We have made much greater headway in dealing with the ISP cartel of AT&T, Comcast, and Verizon, which we talked about earlier. These guys want to take their monopoly control over cell phones and internet access and effectively privatize the internet so they can enhance their profits dramatically. They want to be able to discriminate between users on their networks, both those who provide content and users, so they can shake them down for more money to use the network. The cartel claims that they do not need to be regulated because if consumers do not like what they do with "their" networks, they can go to a competitor. This is an extraordinary lie when these firms have a cartel where it is impossible for new capitalists to effectively enter the market, despite the gonzo profits that theoretically would await a new entrant.

This battle is termed net neutrality, keeping the ISP cartel from having any control over the content and usage of the internet. For a long time this was the rule online because of common carriage rules that existed for telephone companies from the pre-internet era. Back in the 1990s, most people assumed the internet was impervious to corporate or government meddling because it was a magical technology; we now see it was always because of public policy.

When the cartel made known its intentions to get politicians to eliminate net neutrality a decade or so ago, it led to arguably the greatest public-interest organizing campaign in recent communication history. By the second Obama term, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) implemented terrific, unequivocal, net neutrality rules. To be clear, it was more than an aroused citizenry that got the job done.

The big five internet monopolists were supporters to varying degrees of net neutrality, too, because they did not want to be shaken down by the ISP parasites.

But once Trump came into power with his grand pledge to drain the swamp, he opened the floodgates and created an ocean of sewage. His new FCC, led by Chairman Ajit Pai, who cut his teeth as general counsel for Verizon, reversed the net neutrality rules. That matter is now being fought over in Congress and will likely go to the courts. But it is unlikely to return to where it should be until the Republicans lose control over the federal government.

That's not especially encouraging.

The jury is still out, because the overwhelming majority of Americans across the board are in favor of net neutrality. This is actually low-hanging fruit. But there is a lot of organizing to do, and that includes pushing the five internet monopolies to get back on board. What AT&T, Comcast, and Verizon did was to pick some of them off one by one, working on deals saying, "You're safe. We aren't going to mess with you. We're going to mess with other people, and hey, wink wink, we now have the power to protect your monopoly from any serious threats. Just go along with the flow." And so we're in this nebulous area now where they're not supporting net neutrality as strongly as they once did. They could potentially be pushed into supporting net neutrality again.

But there is an even more exciting trend that is taking place that holds much more promise. Even if we return to net neutrality, the problem remains that the ISP cartel still controls cell phones and internet access in the United States. They still make people pay far too much for an inferior system. They are parasites who have no economic justification for their existence; they do so simply because they own the politicians.

The good news on dealing with this cartel is there is an area right now where activism is working really well in the United States, and that's with what's called municipal broadband. Around 750 cities and

communities around the United States for the last twenty years have launched municipal broadband-access systems, because the cable and phone companies were giving their communities such crappy service. These are usually smaller cities where it's not really profitable for the big guys to go in and spend much money, and so you have cities that are getting cut out. It's not like a bunch of hippie places. It's not like Madison and Berkeley are doing that, although they have their examples of this, but it's in places like Chattanooga, Tennessee. It's in places across red states as much as blue and purple. All these communities are starting up their own municipally owned and run, noncommercial, non-surveillance, high-speed broadband systems that are cheaper and better than the commercial alternatives, and they're very popular. The last time I looked, around 170 of these municipal broadband systems were offering comprehensive service.

This is where the fight is. The cartel predictably has not responded to municipal broadband by lowering their prices and improving their service. God forbid. Instead, like a mafia gang threatened by the entry of a new drug dealer on their turf, they are attempting to exterminate the competition, calling municipal broadband "unfair" competition. The cartel has used its unrivaled lobbying clout in all fifty states to have them enact legislation that makes it illegal for communities to start their own municipal broadband. And they've succeeded in blocking it in many states. But in all the states where it's gotten off successfully, like Tennessee, they can't get it overturned because the people will just raise hell if you try to take away their municipal broadband system. The struggle for us will be to pass a national law that will not only make it possible in all fifty states, but also provide capital and all sorts of inducements to make it possible for communities to do this if they want to do it, and eventually we'll get rid of this cartel.

The ultimate goal has to be ubiquitous and free broadband access run by a network of nonprofit and noncommercial services, operated along the principles of, say, the post office.

You described these as a short- or medium-term set of goals. They seem to me profoundly radical. Why would one expect either of the two parties right now to get behind something like this?

Yes it seems very radical, and it certainly would be in the sense that it would shake up the system. But it's not as unrealistic as it sounds. In the case of the ISP cartel, and in the case of journalism, the ground is fertile for organizing. Already we have seen candidates on the margins begin to raise these issues. In former member of Congress Dennis Kucinich's recent campaign for the Democratic nomination to be Governor of Ohio, one of his key planks was universal free broadband for everyone in the state. I think Bernie Sanders is well aware of the crisis in journalism and the general movement he leads would be enthusiastic to back specific proposals.

But, of course, this will take mobilization. And this is the second point — while it will take political organizing, the thing is that we don't have to start from scratch. So yes, it's radical, but it's not hypothetical. This is real-world stuff. And while in the present moment any change at all seems to be difficult to imagine, we have to reminds ourselves how unpredictable the future is. Looking at the historical markers all around us, the only thing we can be certain of is that the world in twenty years will be radically different than the world today, no matter what we do. Our job is to make the radical change toward a world that is progressive, humane, democratic, and sustainable. The future is wide open, for better or for worse.

But even if we organize around journalism and eliminating the ISP cartel, what do we do about those five monopolies that now are the US Steel and the Standard Oil of the information age? What do we do about Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft? It is hard to see how we can have a progressive and democratic society with these behemoths dominating the economy, the culture, and the polity.

You took the words right out of my mouth. Eventually, we're going to have to get in the ring with those guys.

Are you talking about breaking them up into smaller companies, like the telephone companies in the 1980s?

No, I don't think that can work. These markets tend toward monopoly. They're easy to capture because you get tremendous network effects, which basically means that whoever is bigger gets the whole game, because all the users have tremendous incentives to go to the largest network. All the smaller networks disappear. When social media was starting up, there was initially great competition between Facebook and Myspace and one or two others. But pretty soon, once everyone starts going to Facebook, no one's going to Myspace, because Facebook has so many more people on it. When you're on social media, you go where everyone is. So all the other ones disappear and Facebook is all alone, and they're left with a monopoly. That's a network effect. McDonald's hamburgers never got that. You didn't have to go to McDonald's to get a hamburger. You could go to other places still, so Burger King and Wendy's can compete with them.

When you combine that, then, with traditional concentration techniques in capitalism, the massive barriers to entry — Amazon, Google, Microsoft, all five of these companies have to spend billions and billions of dollars annually on these enormous server farms and computer farms and their cloud, and in the case of Amazon, they have huge warehouses — that, along with network effects, pretty much precludes any lasting competition. So the idea that you can break up companies like that into thirty or forty smaller parts and have competitive markets doesn't make any sense. These are natural monopolies, so to speak.

So that leaves two reforms. One is, you let them remain private, but you regulate them like the phone company was in America for a long time, AT&T. You let them make profits but hold them to public regulations, in exchange for letting them have a natural monopoly. To me, it

doesn't take much study to see that this is not realistic. These are huge, extremely powerful entities. The idea that you're going to regulate them and get them to do stuff that's not profitable to them — it's ridiculous. Do you think you're going to take on the five largest companies in the world and have that be successful? There's no evidence to suggest that.

The other option is to nationalize them or municipalize them. You take them out of the capital-accumulation process, you set them up as independent, nonprofit, noncommercial concerns.

But you're talking about nationalizing five of the biggest corporations in the United States. That would require a massive social movement, even an anticapitalist one.

That's probably the case. But, ironically, what I'm proposing hasn't always been associated with the anticapitalist left. One person who wrote on this exact subject was Henry Calvert Simons, a laissez-faire economist from the University of Chicago, who was Milton Friedman's mentor. He opposed the New Deal. He lived in the mid-twentieth century. Not a fan of labor unions or social security — a pure, free-market capitalist. But he wrote widely that if you have a monopoly that can't be broken into small bits, the idea that you can regulate it is nonsense. This monopoly is not only going to screw over consumers, it's going to screw over legitimate firms, legitimate capitalist enterprises, because it's going to charge them higher prices. He said, the only thing you can do if you believe in capitalism is nationalize them. Take them out of the profit system. Otherwise, they'll completely distort the marketplace and corrupt the system into crony capitalism. I think that's true, whether you believe in capitalism or, like me, you are a socialist.

But as difficult as it may seem today, this is going to be an unavoidable fight. Cracks in the façade like the Edward Snowden revelations and the Cambridge Analytic scandal are chipping away at the legitimacy and popular acceptance of these monopolies, but we have a long way to go. The place to begin is to identify the problem and talk about it and

get it on the table. Don't assume the issue cannot be raised because there is no ready-made functional alternative in hand. In unpredictable and turbulent times like these, issues can explode before our eyes, but it helps if we lay the groundwork in advance.

Once you start talking about taking the center of the capitalist economy and taking it out of capitalism, well, then I think you're getting, like you said, you're getting to very radical turf, and that's exactly where we're pointed — where we have to be pointed.

In this response to Dylan Riley's article about Pierre Bourdieu, we argue that Riley's account suffers from crucial omissions and major misunderstandings, thus seriously distorting Bourdieu's views. Among these omissions are (1) Bourdieu's theory of practice, which is the theoretical foundation of both his own sociology and his critique of the leading paradigms in the social sciences, and (2) his career-long analysis of social class. Bourdieu's undertakings as a committed scholar, we argue finally, merit much more serious attention by left-wing scholars than the few casual and dismissive remarks Riley makes. Bourdieu was the leading left sociologist in France and much of Europe during the last decade of his life, and his approach offers crucial lessons for the current struggles of the Left.

A DEFENSE OF BOURDIEU

JOHAN HEILBRON & GEORGE STEINMETZ

The second issue of *Catalyst* contains a long article by Dylan Riley on Pierre Bourdieu and the exceptional resonance of his work in American and international social science. Riley doesn't beat around the bush: Bourdieu's sociology, he argues, offers a lousy theory of social class. Its popularity in academia derives from the fact that it legitimizes academic privilege and explains academics' lack of any connection to popular movements. Bourdieu's theory resonates with self-help fads like yoga, gluten-free diets, exercise monitors, and the like. Riley concludes that Bourdieu's entire project is directed toward transforming sociologists' consciousness rather than transforming society.

Since we won't be beating around the bush either, we should start by observing that Riley's article is sloppy and riddled with mistakes, misspellings, and omissions. It is helpful neither for understanding contemporary capitalist societies, nor for the political reflection that the Left urgently needs. Riley distorts Bourdieu's work, ignores essential parts of it, and in the end regresses to comfortable slogans such as "truly radical critical theory," without providing any clue as to what

that might really mean. Riley calls on his reader to "face the facts," but as we will show, large swathes of his essay are fact free.

In this article we will first rebut the arguments in the opening part of Riley's article concerning Bourdieu's theory. In the second section we will turn to the concluding part of Riley's article, which attempts to explain the popularity of Bourdieu among sociologists by deploying a sort of sociology of sociologists. Here, Riley begins by noting the enormous popularity of Bourdieu's work globally and among his colleagues — whom he characterizes as "elite academics in the advanced capitalist countries." But this popularity has nothing to do with the perspicacity, generativeness, or originality of Bourdieu's thought. Riley argues instead that Bourdieu appeals to politically powerless social scientists because Bourdieu equates social change with self-transformation. Bourdieu also contributes to these social scientists' professional success. Riley's portrait of Bourdieu as an academic self-help theorist can now be mounted on the wall alongside the veritable gallery of wild denunciations of Bourdieu, ranging from slanderous accusations — Bourdieu as "intellectual terrorist"[1] and anti-Semite[2] — to depictions of him as a mere leftist activist posing as a scholar.[3]

Our paper's main "policy" recommendation is that students should find someone else with whom to study Bourdieu. We will also offer an alternative reading of the sociology of sociology. One benefit of the kind of "general theory of social change" that Riley advocates and mistakenly equates with explanatory social theory is professional success in US sociology. The enduring elision of explanatory social science with general, universal theories is more problematic and puzzling than the popularity of Bourdieu's reflexive, historicist, theoretical approach.

1 Jeannine Verdès-Leroux, *Deconstructing Pierre Bourdieu: Against Sociological Terrorism from the Left* (New York: Algora, 2001).

2 See Alain Badiou, *Reflections on Anti-Semitism* (London: Verso, 2013), discussing attacks on Bourdieu by Jean-Claude Milner along these lines.

3 Didier Lapeyronnie, "Radical Academicism, or the Sociologist's Monologue: Who Are Radical Sociologists Talking with?" *Revue française de sociologie* 47, Supplement: An Annual English Selection (2006): 3–33.

Although we cannot possibly go into all the issues in this brief response, we will first signal some of the numerous mistakes and lacunae in Riley's article, briefly discuss a few fundamental questions of class theory and theories of social change, and then turn to the question of political commitment and public social science.

"SCHOLARSHIP"

It is quite astonishing that an academic essay (with dozens of footnotes) by a tenured sociology professor about one of the best-known social scientists in the world contains so many inaccuracies and mistakes. In the few paragraphs recapitulating Bourdieu's career and work, Riley concedes that Bourdieu's early work on Algeria produced important publications, even "masterful" ones. But neither *Sociologie de l'Algérie* (1958) nor *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (1972) are "ethnographic studies." *Sociologie de l'Algérie* is a synthetic, sociological overview of the country and its populations, essentially based on Bourdieu's readings of the existing literature. It was published in an encyclopedic series of short books (*Que sais-je?*) and was intended to critically inform the French public about the country where the French were fighting a colonial war, but of which they knew very little. On the other hand, no one who knows Bourdieu's work or the secondary literature on French colonial Algeria will consider *Sociologie de l'Algérie* as one of Bourdieu's masterpieces. It has many of the qualities of an examination by a brilliant graduate of the French *Ecole Normale Supérieure* and is Bourdieu's first publication. There are genuine insights, but some of these are only included in the second edition of *Sociologie de l'Algérie*. Since Riley does not provide any reference for these books, it is unclear to which version he is referring. *Outline for a Theory of Practice*, to use the title of the English translation of the 1972 book, is no ethnographic study either, but a primarily theoretical book, although it is based on a variety of research endeavors Bourdieu had undertaken, including ethnographic ones. These books can only be labeled ethnographic if

one defines any social scientific discussion of the colonized, "exotic," or "primitive" Other as "ethnography." This definition of ethnography was rejected by Bourdieu and most other sociologists and ethnologists of his generation.

Bourdieu did become secretary to Raymond Aron's research center, not in 1964, but in 1962; the center in question was not the "Center for Historical Sociology," but the Center for European Sociology.

PRACTICE THEORY

After this unfortunate start, the next section of Riley's essay sets out to explain Bourdieu's central concepts. Riley identifies four of these: capital, habitus, fields, and symbolic power. Here again, one need not be a Bourdieu specialist to note that there is a curious and symptomatic omission: nowhere does Riley discuss the concept of practice. Riley even switches back and forth between "action" or "social action" (a Weberian term) to "behavior" (a behavioralist term). But, as was mentioned above, Bourdieu's first theoretical book was not accidentally called *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972, tr. 1977). It was followed by no less than three other books which continued his reflections on the theory of social practice and the centrality of practice for the social sciences. In English translation these are *The Logic of Practice* (1980. tr. 1990), *Pascalian Meditations* (1997, tr. 2000) and *Practical Reason* (1994, tr. 1998).

All of this work argues in great detail and with appropriate theoretical vigor that the social sciences need to account for social practices, meaning, for social processes that are neither entirely systemic nor completely random. The dominant social science approaches (structuralism, functionalism, theories of rational choice, etc.) fail at precisely this point: their assumptions and modes of conceptualization are fundamentally at odds with the practical nature of human action and interaction. In ultra-short summary: they confuse the logic of practice with the practice of logic, as Marx said, in a phrase that Bourdieu often cites.

To give just one example of this argument, in his early work Bourdieu

demonstrates at length that structuralist models of kinship are empirically ill-founded. What is central to the structural analysis of kinship (cross-cousin marriage) is in reality very infrequent. But Bourdieu doesn't stop here. It is not enough to falsify a theory, contrary to Riley's prescription, which he bases on Popper (an exceedingly strange bedfellow for a Marxist). Bourdieu continues his analysis in a reflexive manner (another practice that Riley profoundly misunderstands), and, partly on that basis, proposes an alternative theory. Bourdieu's revised theory can be found in *The Logic of Practice* (1980, tr. 1990) and *The Bachelor's Ball* (2002, tr. 2008), the latter containing the successive studies of his native village in the Béarn region.

Without going into Bourdieu's own theory, it is important to recall that Bourdieu confronted his Algerian and French observations with Lévi-Strauss's analysis of kinship, arguing that the academic acclaim of structuralist models ultimately rests on an ethnocentric bias. That bias is rooted in the *scholastic disposition*, which confuses a theoretical model of "action as rule-following" with the reality of marriage practices. Proposing an alternative account in the books referred to above, Bourdieu simultaneously developed his reflexive critique of scholastic and intellectualist biases. Bourdieu's cool and consistent dissection of the sophisticated denial of the practical dynamics of social processes is one of his most profound and critical contributions to social science. If this is left out, not only is his work fundamentally misrepresented, its significance is radically misunderstood. It is probably not too far-fetched to interpret this omission as a form of resistance, in the socioanalytic sense, itself rooted in the forms of academic ethnocentrism that Bourdieu, as one of the very few academic social scientists, relentlessly examined and combatted.

CLASS THEORY

In his discussion of class theory and historical change, Riley raises several issues. Each one of them should be discussed in appropriate detail,

but there are a few fundamental questions that need to be addressed first, all the more so because Riley systematically avoids them.

The first is whether class theory should be based, first and foremost, on the distribution of economic resources and positions in the production process, or instead should take other resources and fields of social activity into account as well. This is the fundamental question with which Bourdieu, more than anyone else, confronted social scientists. Should we, in other words, recognize cultural and social capital as relatively independent and important sources of power and inequality or not? And correlatively: should we recognize the relative autonomy of other social fields from the economy, or are they to be understood as a function, reflection, or derivation of the capitalist economy and the class system? All questions concerning indicators and measurements of the various forms of capital obviously depend on this more fundamental issue. But Riley avoids it, sounding nostalgic about the once firm and uncompromising economism of Marxism.

The second issue follows from the first. If a plurality of resources and fields exist, understanding social relations implies either abandoning the notion of class altogether, like many stratification researchers do, or paying closer attention to class fractions, processes of class (re)composition, and to the field of power as a key locus of class domination. Bourdieu — and this is not exactly breaking news — chose the third option. That is what *Distinction* (1979, tr. 1984) and his work on *The State Nobility* (1989, tr. 1996), to cite just these two major works, are all about. So here again, the choice is whether we retreat to some form of economistic class theory or move forward toward more refined forms of class analysis and domination such as the one Bourdieu proposed. There is no way this fundamental choice can be evaded by invoking difficulties in empirical analysis. Although Riley insinuates that the "stolid mainstream" of sociology has adopted Bourdieu, it was precisely on these issues of operationalization and measurement that the "mainstream" attacks on Bourdieu were launched in US sociology.

The third issue, related to the previous ones, concerns social action.

If different forms of capital exist, and various "fields" represent the context for the accumulation of capital, how is social action to be understood? Are these different forms of capital accumulated according to a rational-choice logic of maximizing returns, or does this process display radically different dynamics? Criticizing the fallacies of economics, Bourdieu proposed notions like "habitus" and "feel for the game" to develop an alternative to the rudimentary interest-based schemes of mainstream economics and certain varieties of Marxism. Here again the fundamental choice in the social sciences is between adopting an ahistorical, rational-choice type of model, or, to summarize very quickly, a contextualized, dispositional theory of action — perhaps underwritten by a deeper socioanalytic understanding of the psyche.[4] Bourdieu's sociology, as is well known, provides an alternative to economic theories of action, while incorporating a materialist dimension into his analysis by differentiating and thus generalizing the notion of capital. Rather than relying on rational calculation or assuming material interest as a sufficient basis for action, people mobilize their resources according to the dispositions they have inherited as well as acquired, and they do so in specific social settings. Interests are not defined solely in terms of an individual's ownership of economic resources or "means of production" but also in terms of interests that emerge (in the strong, ontological sense of emergence) within specific fields. But these fields are highly variable, contingent, and historically and geographically variable. A class analysis that does not at the very least combine attention to interests rooted in ownership of capital and productive forces with interests grounded in other social arenas is doomed to failure. Yet Riley suggests that if habitus cannot be seen, touched, and palpated, it cannot legitimately be part of social science at all. This is an empiricist objection, one that is deeply at odds with Marx's own philosophy of

4 George Steinmetz, "From Sociology to Socioanalysis: Rethinking Bourdieu's Concepts of Habitus, Symbolic Capital, and Field along Psychoanalytic Lines" in Lynn Chancer and John Andrews, eds., *The Unhappy Divorce of Sociology and Psychoanalysis: Diverse Perspectives on the Psychosocial* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 205–221.

science, not to mention the logic of natural science and philosophical forms of ontological depth realism.

Riley avoids addressing these issues. Instead, his discussion focuses on how to measure cultural capital, how to assess its precise explanatory weight, how to operationalize the habitus notion, and the like. All these issues need to be taken seriously, and they have been: there is a considerable empirical and historical literature about them. Some of it has elaborated upon Bourdieu's work, others have criticized and corrected it, but Riley ignores almost all of this literature, apparently because he prefers theoretical critique and antiquated Marxist schemas, or because he is unwilling or unable to read the decades' worth of work published in venues such as *Actes de la Recherche*, *Politix*, *Genèses*, and other journals, not to mention the book series *Le Sens Commun* or *Liber* and the publishing house *Raisons d'agir*, and in other recent international literature outside of the original French context. On the fruitfulness and validity of *Distinction* (1979, tr. 1984), see Bourdieu's subsequent thoughts, among others, in *Practical Reason* (1994, tr. 1998). More recently Philippe Coulangeon and Julien Duval edited a wide-ranging, international collection of research papers in their *Routledge Companion to Bourdieu's Distinction* (2014). This is a state-of-the-art collection that presents almost forty years of research on social classes and lifestyles.[5]

BOURDIEU AND "MACROSOCIOLOGICAL" ACCOUNTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

A separate part of Riley's account is that Bourdieu's work does not offer an account of social reproduction or change. This needs to be translated. After all, one finds discussions of an infinite number of social changes in all of Bourdieu's work. Even the reproduction of class structure (e.g., in *Reproduction in Education and Society*) required the invention of new

5 See Philippe Coulangeon and Julien Duval, eds., *Routledge Companion to Bourdieu's "Distinction"* (London: Routledge, 2014).

forms of class domination, such as the school system. Everyone would recognize that Bourdieu is talking about social changes when he discusses the gap between the habitus of Algerian peasants and French colonial modernity, in *Algeria 1960* (1977, tr. 1979), that the changes in *The Bachelors' Ball* lie at the heart of the marriage crisis of village men, that changes in the international and French media landscape undergird the crisis of scientific autonomy and expertise in *On Television*. We challenge the reader to find a single text by Bourdieu where some form of social change is not discussed.

So clearly, Riley has some other "scale" of social change in mind. Riley asserts that Bourdieu does not offer a compelling "macrosociological" account of contemporary society pitched at the "scale" of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. This needs to be unpacked.

Riley acknowledges that Bourdieu became "the organic intellectual of the *gauche de la gauche*" (the left wing of the Left) and an "unavoidable point of reference for the contemporary intellectual left," but he quickly casts suspicion on this by alerting us to Bourdieu's appeal to the "stolid mainstream of American social science." Since we are given no examples of such "stolid" and presumably politically disappointing sociologists, we are forced to imagine what the author might have in mind. This is more difficult than it looks, since Riley's own definition of his desideratum — explanatory "macrosociological theory" — appears to be located precisely in this tepid mainstream. Quoting Phil Gorski to the effect that Bourdieu's work "does not contain a general theory of social changes," Riley immediately concludes that Bourdieu's sociology is nonexplanatory. This is a total non sequitur. Every post-positivist knows that good social science can be explanatory without generalizing across empirical events or social processes. In fact, Max Weber, whom Riley cites approvingly, argued vigorously against the scientistic illusion of a social science that claims to discern general laws of history. Most contemporary Marxists have abandoned nineteenth-century ideals of general laws of history, and there is a good argument to be made

that Marx's occasional appeals to the idea of a universal theory of capitalism differ from the underlying logic of his mature theory. Read as social theory rather than social eschatology, Marx's analysis offers an explanation for perennial capitalist crises. While crisis is sometimes followed by a rearrangement of social relations to permit new rounds of capital accumulation, this is not guaranteed by the theory. As Frédéric Lordon writes,

> Crisis is the name of the more or less disorderly transition from one accumulation regime to another. In other words, a crisis occurs when significant changes in the institutional setting of capitalism can be observed. However, such a change cannot be determined - only by an "objective" economic state of facts. It all depends on the way the agents (the social groups) make judgements about it, and are consequently driven to take a new, transformative (and conflictual) course of action.[6]

This sort of Marxism "without guarantees"[7] is quite remote from any "general theory of social change." And it is particularly remote from typically American versions of "macrosociological Marxism" in which some "independent variables" are arranged to produce "outcomes" such as revolution, fascism, or genocide. These mechanical forms of Marxism ironically mirror conservative policy science: research geared toward counterinsurgency identifies the same independent variables as "insurgent" sociology. A political left faced with the inexorable

6 Frédéric Lordon, "The Economic Catastrophe as a Passionate Event," *Crisis and Critique* 3, no. 3 (2016): 275–283; see also Robert Boyer, "La théorie de la régulation à l'épreuve des crises," *Revue de la régulation* 19 (Spring 2016), online, consulted Nov. 13, 2017. http://regulation.revues.org/11923; Bob Jessop, ed., *Regulation Theory and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Pub., 2001).

7 Kenneth Surin, "Marxism, without Guarantees: What I Learned from Stuart Hall: For Steven Salaita," *Cultural Critique* 89 (Winter 2015): 136–146; Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees" in Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996), 24–45.

operations of "independent variables" or determining structures can only become mired in fatalism.[8]

SOCIOLOGY OF SOCIOLOGY

In the last part of his article, Riley jumps from Bourdieu's sociology to its reception in American academia. Riley's crude and reductionist diagnostic is once again accompanied by crucial omissions and distortions, and by a self-complacent lack of curiosity about intellectual life in other countries and parts of the world.

Riley's article ends not just with a simplistic account of Bourdieu's success in American academia but is also inconsistent with what he says in the first part. Riley after all speaks of Bourdieu's "masterful ethnographic studies" and acknowledges that "in terms of intellectual sophistication and empirical range Bourdieu's work is virtually peerless." How is it possible then to bluntly assert that Bourdieusian sociology is "best understood not as a social theory at all, but as an ideological formation"? Here, as in the first part, instead of empirically analyzing evidence, Riley regresses into a paleo-Marxist mode of stigmatizing the work of others as "ideological" and assigning a function to it for justifying elite privilege. This section will probably remind some readers of Bourdieu's incisive remarks about the Althusserian reading of *Capital* and the pitiful fate of materialists without material. Riley's analysis in any case is not up to the standards of any serious form of sociological reception analysis. On the contrary, it smacks of ideological battles, in which labeling the opponent and unveiling the hidden function of their orientation is sufficient to discredit their scholarly merit. This aspect of Riley's article also reveals it to be a move within a very specific professional discipline within a very specific country — American sociology in 2017. His audience is not the amorphous Left to which it

8 In some cases, "Marxist" explanations of insurgency become interchangeable with those generated by counterinsurgency researchers, where both try to identify the "variables" producing insurgent "outcomes."

sometimes seems to be addressed but, rather, the "elite academics."

Although Riley doesn't propose a serious analysis of Bourdieu's reception in the US, two remarks are nonetheless in order. The first pertains to the issue of reflexivity. The progress of social science for Bourdieu implies and depends on the capacity of researchers to be reflexive about their own practice; that is, to use the tools of the social sciences to objectify the research process, to be reflexive in the use of categories and instruments. His last lecture series at the Collège de France, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, presents the program of this reflexive scientific practice. To present this concept of reflexivity as an "inner-directed radicalism" is a fundamental distortion of Bourdieu's view. Instead of subjectifying the scientific subject, as some anthropologists and Alvin Gouldner proposed, Bourdieu incessantly called for *objectifying* the subject of science. This is not a narcissistic exercise, a confessional, or a concession to the postmodernist mood of the times, but on the contrary, it is proposed as a means for improving scientific analysis, of transcending the limits of disciplines and liberating research from its academic routines and its geographical restrictions.

Equally ignored in Riley's essay is the fact that, on the basis of this reflexive posture, Bourdieu conceived and developed radically new forms of *committed* scholarship. Contrary to the *prophetic* intellectual that Sartre (and many other Marxists) embodied, and distinct from the model of the "specific intellectual" that Foucault advocated, Bourdieu insisted instead on the *collective intellectual*. His social scientific inquiries were carried out by research groups, organized as dialogic collectives. The collective intellectual is one of the many exciting but incomplete ideas that Bourdieu proposed in the last years of his life. From the very beginning of his career in Algeria, his public political interventions went far beyond the ritualized signing of petitions and the occasional participation in mass demonstrations. Although much less visible in the US, Bourdieu was at the origin of a variety of new initiatives and organizations. Part of these sustained efforts are documented in the volume *Political Interventions: Social Science and*

Political Action (2002, tr. 2008) to which Riley only refers in passing. It should be recalled in this context that Bourdieu founded and directed one of the most innovative social science journals in the world, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, which is rarely noted by American social scientists because it exists only in French. *Actes* combines different types of materials — documents, statistical tables, but also iconographic material. It refuses academic pomp, combines different methods (including quantitative and qualitative ones), and it did so long before "mixed methods" became fashionable. It mixes high and low genres. To refer to *Actes* as "a factory for Bourdieu's own work and that of his students" is either arrogant ignorance or malicious slander. *Actes* published work by some of the most innovative social scientists and humanists in the world: historians such as Christophe Charle, Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, Eric Hobsbawm, Jürgen Kocka, Carl Schorske, Joan Scott, and E.P. Thompson, sociologists like Cicourel, Elias, Goffman, Zelizer, anthropologists Bateson and Goody, economists Robert Boyer and Amartya Sen, linguists Ducrot, Encrevé, and Labov, classicist Jean Bollack, sinologists Jacques Gernet and Pierre-Etienne Will. To imply that this journal was run like a Bourdieu "factory" is laughable. It also fundamentally misrecognizes the project of *Actes* as an interdisciplinary crossroads of the critical social and human sciences. It inserts *Actes* into a parochial American stereotype. And it again points to the sloppy research standards of this article; at the very least Riley could have looked at past issues of *Actes* and tracked down the disciplines and geographic locations of the authors in question.

For a decade Bourdieu also led another journal, *Liber* (1989–1998), which was an original European version of the *New York or London Reviews of Books*. It was ultimately published in ten languages, but never appeared in English. The global hegemony of the US and of the English language, as with other hegemons in world history, corresponds to a domestic intellectual insularity, which is so profound that it is rarely noticed anymore. How about "provincializing the US" for a change?

Bourdieu also founded and ran a publishing house, *Raisons d'agir*, which publishes accessible and attractive small books about important public issues. Together these books would constitute an "international people's encyclopedia," and some of the dozens of volumes that have been published thus far have indeed became enormous bestsellers and provoked vigorous public debates. This was the case with Bourdieu's own book *On Television*, and with Serge Halimi's *The New Watchdogs*, an incisive and revealing analysis of the functioning of the media.

The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society (1993, tr. 1999) was an earlier project with a similar objective and impact. A collective enterprise in "participant objectification," as Bourdieu called it, it consists of a series of interviews of men and women from different walks of life about their lives and the difficulties they encounter. Published shortly before the French presidential elections, it intervened in the political debate by giving voice to people who were no longer heard in the political world that had "turned inward, absorbed in its internal rivalries, its own problems, its own interests."

In a postscript, Bourdieu observed:

> [A]ll the signs are there of all the malaises which, since they find no legitimate expression in the political world, can sometimes be identified in frenzied outbursts of xenophobia and racism. With only the old-fashioned category of "social" at their disposal to think about these unexpressed and often inexpressible malaises, political organizations cannot perceive them and, still less, take them on. They could do so only by expanding the narrow vision of "politics" they have inherited from the past and by encompassing not only all the claims brought into the public arena by ecological, antiracist or feminist movements (among others), but also all the diffuse expectations and hopes which, because they often touch on the ideas that people have about their own identity and self-respect, seem to be a private affair and therefore legitimately excluded from political debate. A truly democratic politics must give itself the means of getting away from the alternative of a

> technocratic arrogance that claims to make people happy in spite of themselves and a demagogic resignation that accepts the verdicts of supply and demand, whether expressed in market tests, poll results or approval ratings.[9]

These words were written a quarter of a century ago. *The Weight of the World* was widely discussed in France, parts of it were adapted in the theater, and it stimulated similar research and publication enterprises in several European countries. But in the US, very little of this public face of Bourdieu's work is known. Riley would have done a service to the American left had he evoked these initiatives and their functioning and discussed their potential relevance for overcoming the academic insularity of American academics and the pitiful condition of "public intellectuals" in the US. That could have provided a new impetus to the debate about public social science and the role of social scientists in social movements of the Left. Instead of doing that, instead of engaging in a dialogue with committed social scientists from other countries and contexts, Riley criticizes a caricature of Bourdieu, while indulging in campus fantasies about "truly radical critical theory." The Left in the US, and elsewhere, deserves better. ⊬

9 Pierre Bourdieu et al., *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 627–8.

In this commentary on Dylan Riley's impressive demolition of Bourdieu's sociology of social stratification, social reproduction, and social change, I attempt to recuperate Bourdieu's corpus as centered around the interconnected questions of symbolic violence, reflexivity, and public engagement. Having redeemed Bourdieu's theory, I then examine its shortcomings as misrecognizing capitalism and its universities.

MAKING SENSE OF BOURDIEU

MICHAEL BURAWOY

How should we engage our intellectual opponents? Ignore them? Demolish them? Absorb them? Within academia, where recognition is everything, denying it is often the most effective and least costly weapon. Refusing to recognize opponents only works, however, if they are not already in the limelight. When our opponents have won recognition, when they are powerful figures, what is to be done? Within Marxism, demolition has been a frequent practice, reducing opponents to intellectual rubble. Think of Lenin's withering criticism of opportunists, anarchists, social democrats, or anyone who dared to disagree with him. The only people worthy of such aggression, however, were his competitors in the political field. There is a second tradition within Marxism: interrogating powerful opponents to assess their strength and then appropriating them under an enlarged canvas. This is not vanquishing through demolition but domination through hegemony, or as Antonio Gramsci might say, moving from a "war of movement" to a "war of position." Here the strategy is to critically appropriate the truth of the opponent by absorbing it within one's

own expanded framework. This requires a certain appreciation of the opponent. Gramsci's critical appropriation of Croce, Marx's critical appropriation of Hegel or Ricardo, Lukács's critical appropriation of Weber, and Marcuse's critical appropriation of Freud come to mind.

Every strategy comes with risks. Ignoring the opponent leaves one unscathed, but it can also leave one out of touch with emerging intellectual currents. It can turn into a lost opportunity to expand one's own horizons through conversation with others. Demolition can win one acclaim, and without having to make contributions of one's own. But it can bring free publicity to the opponent. By forcing the opponent into a straitjacket, it risks heaping disrepute onto the critic, and even provoking a belligerent reaction. Finally, neutralizing the opponent by absorption, taking the enemy seriously, can so transform one's own thinking that allies may accuse one of betrayal. After all, the practice of critique, if carried out properly, shapes the critic as much as the criticized.

The question at hand is how to engage Pierre Bourdieu.[1] In the spirit of full disclosure, I confess that I myself have taken all three approaches to Bourdieu. I began by ignoring and dismissing him, but that could not be sustained as he gathered steam over the last four decades. I then attempted demolition, but I was certainly not adequate to the task. The more I read, the more impressed I became, leading me to a more complex process of absorption and critical appreciation.[2]

While initially reverential, Dylan Riley's assessment of Bourdieu's class theory quickly turns to demolition.[3] His treatment of Bourdieu is reminiscent of Perry Anderson's youthful, sweeping assault on Western Marxism as lost in the ethereal realms of philosophy, ideology, and culture.[4] Following Lenin, Anderson claimed that revolutionary theory

1 For a short account of Bourdieu's own strategy of dealing with intellectual opponents see the coda at the end of this article.

2 Michael Burawoy and Karl von Holdt, *Conversations with Bourdieu* (Johannesburg; University of Witwatersrand Press, 2012).

3 Dylan Riley, "Bourdieu's Class Theory," *Catalyst* 1, no. 2 (Summer 2017).

4 Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: New Left Books, 1976).

only develops in close connection to a mass revolutionary movement. Similarly, Riley claims that Bourdieu's appeal, in the final analysis, lies in offering "political relevance to an intelligentsia with little organizational link to popular forces." In other words, like Anderson's view of Western Marxism, Riley's view of Bourdieusian sociology signals a retreat from Marxism and its politics.

Anderson was writing at a time of optimism, a period of leftist insurgency when Western Marxism might appear as a defeatist deviation from a true revolutionary road. Today we live in nonrevolutionary times, and Bourdieu provides an appealing framework for many critically minded scholars. I agree with Riley that the appeal of Pierre Bourdieu cannot be reduced to his science; his voluminous writings are also a political response to the contemporary period, a reaction to the ascendancy of neoliberalism and right-wing populism. Equally compelling, Bourdieu offers ammunition for a critical response to the external assault on academia.

Where Bourdieu has a clear political program, Riley's alternative is unclear. He never tells us *who* are the popular forces nor *how* we should be connected to them. In dismantling Bourdieu, however, his essay forcefully raises the question — if not the answer — as to what it means to be a Marxist in academia today.

Perhaps the first task is simply to maintain the presence of Marxism as a living and open tradition. When the Marxist presence in academia is in retreat and its connection to the world beyond is tenuous, there is always the danger of sectarianism. Marxism risks becoming dogmatic and sclerotic and losing what little support it has. Facing the defeat of the working class as a revolutionary force, Western Marxism sustained itself through engagement with the highest expression of bourgeois thought. Today, Marxism needs to find new sparring partners. I would suggest Pierre Bourdieu is a worthy candidate, the highest expression of critical sociology and, moreover, a very influential presence.

As Riley acknowledges, Bourdieu has become a sanctified figure not just in sociology but also in the humanities as well as in other social

sciences, with an impressive global presence. No other sociologist approaches his influence. The closest parallel was the reign of Talcott Parsons during the 1950s and 1960s when his modernization theory and structural functionalism also took on a transdisciplinary and global presence. While Parsons has since become a relic of history — who now reads Talcott Parsons? — the longevity of Bourdieu is more assured. His work is better equipped to deal with different political conjunctures than the abstract theory of Parsons. That makes Riley's examination of what places Bourdieu on such a pedestal a critically important project.

OVERVIEW: MAKING SENSE OF BOURDIEU

Riley cannot find any scientific merit in Bourdieu's social theory. He declares that Bourdieu's achievements cannot match the macrosociologies of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim in three key areas: social stratification, social change, and social reproduction. That's a tall order! Why should failure to reach such lofty heights warrant the dismissal of Bourdieu? Be that as it may, Riley does not actually compare Bourdieu with these three canonical figures. For Riley, it would appear that pointing to the shortcomings of Bourdieu's theory is sufficient evidence of falling short of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim as if they are without flaws. I will examine Riley's claims in some detail as they are quite revealing of both Bourdieu and the sociological tradition.

After exposing the limitations of Bourdieu's theory, Riley concludes that its influence lies in its resonance with the lived experience and career interests of elite academics: competition for distinction, the preservation of privilege, and a form of ersatz politics for a critical community cut off from "popular classes." In Bourdieu's terms, to understand the appeal of Bourdieu one must turn from the manifest "logic of theory" to the latent "logic of practice."

In other words, Riley does to Bourdieu what Bourdieu does to those he seeks to belittle, namely, attributing their influence to the position and disposition of their followers within the academic field, rather than

to the substance of their work. Riley undertakes a double reduction: he reduces Bourdieu's science to a poorly executed positivism and then reduces Bourdieu's politics to insulation in the academic field. This double reduction adopts contradictory standards: Bourdieu is attacked for not conforming to positivist standards of comparative sociology and then, in the same breath, for not being attached to the popular classes. Yet it is hard to simultaneously be a positivist and an engaged intellectual — the one requires autonomy from and the other embeddedness in the wider society.

Riley is barking up the wrong tree. As I shall suggest, Bourdieu is neither a failed positivist nor an isolationist. Riley's double standards are, therefore, doubly inappropriate. I will seek to redeem both Bourdieu's scientific and his political projects, constituting his work as an important critique of and challenge to Marxism.

I will proceed in three steps: demolition, recuperation, and critique. First, I agree with much of Riley's demolition — Bourdieu's class analysis is flawed (if not necessarily for the reasons Riley claims); his theory of social change is at best embryonic; his refusal to conceptualize capitalism is fatal. Still, Riley's mode of demolition is problematic. His three foci — social stratification, social reproduction, and social change — while they appear reasonable enough, force Bourdieu's thinking into discrete problematics that have the effect of rendering his originality banal. I show how each of Riley's questions introduces false divisions while suppressing essential distinctions.

In the second part, recuperation, I will substitute an alternative set of distinctions that emanate from the key notion in Bourdieu's theory, namely, *symbolic domination*— domination that is not recognized as such. I contest Riley's dismissal that this idea has limited applicability within advanced capitalism. Symbolic domination raises the question of *reflexivity* — how is it that sociologists can know something that others don't; how can they produce a truth that is different from and superior to common sense? Furthermore, how is it, as Bourdieu argues, that others can't grasp the sociological truth even when presented with it?

By drawing on the very Bourdieusian theory he has rejected, Riley's demolition backs into the question of reflexivity. Bourdieu's appeal, he claims, resides in its resonance with the defense of the autonomy of the academic field and the struggle for distinction within it. In so doing he makes the questionable assumption that academia is fundamentally different from the world beyond where Bourdieu's theory doesn't work. To the defense of academic privilege and the competition for distinction, Riley adds a further claim to explain the influence of Bourdieu: namely he offers an ersatz politics, a substitute for a "true" politics based on a connection to "popular classes." But this notion of "true" politics not only comes without elaboration or justification but also overlooks Bourdieu's broad engagements with diverse publics, including the dominated classes. In fact, Bourdieu has carved out a royal road to *public sociology* — not only a traditional public sociology in which the sociologist represents some universal interest but also an organic public sociology forged in close connection to the dominated.

These three dimensions of Bourdieu's sociology — symbolic domination, reflexivity, and public engagement — not only provide the three moments of his scientific research program, but also define a political project: intellectuals on the road to class power. To each dimension of his scientific research program, there is a corresponding moment in his political project: symbolic domination gives a privileged place to the sociologist; reflexivity makes the sociologist the vanguard of intellectuals; and public engagement allows intellectuals to represent their interests as the interests not just of other intellectuals but of all classes.

After assembling Bourdieu's scientific-cum-political vision, the third part of this essay turns to critique, assessing its limitations, in particular its misrecognition of capitalism. Refusal to engage the *systemic* character of modern capitalism leads Bourdieu to exaggerate the power of intellectuals, and universalize the notion of symbolic domination. Restoring a focus on capitalism allows a more realistic assessment of the place of intellectuals. The appropriation of Bourdieu's intellectualist project

within a Marxist framework points to an alternative scientific-cum-political project, one that revolves around the capitalist university.

I: DEMOLITION

This first section is a critical appreciation of Riley's demolition of Bourdieu, underlining our substantial agreement yet pointing to the limitations of reducing Bourdieu's influence to his theory's resonance with the academic habitus. There's more to Bourdieu than meets Riley's critical eye.

Class Analysis: From Classes on Paper to Classification Struggle

Riley claims that in each of three defining areas of sociology: stratification, reproduction, and social change, Bourdieu has little to offer. There is much merit in his critique. Let's start with stratification, or class analysis where he takes Bourdieu's *Distinction* to task.[5] Riley reduces the purpose of this humungous endeavor to showing that class is related to behavior through the mediation of habitus, itself inculcated through processes of class socialization. There is, indeed, a rough correlation between, on the one hand, occupation as measured by economic and cultural capital and, on the other hand, lifestyle based on consumption of food, films, newspapers, etc. As Riley suggests, Bourdieu's claim that class and habitus underlie the ostensible correlation between occupation and lifestyle is tautological given that class and habitus are neither defined independently nor accessible to empirical examination — one knows them only by their putative effects. So Riley concludes that the linear causality between class and behavior cannot be demonstrated so long as class is ill-defined. Moreover, the claim that each class has its own habitus is belied by the simultaneous assertion that all classes also share a common habitus.

5 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984 [1979]).

In focusing only on the way class does or does not shape behavior Riley misses the key to *Distinction*, namely symbolic domination. Although Bourdieu doesn't acknowledge it, his model is parallel to Marx's commodity fetishism in which the exchange relation between objects hides the production relations between humans. Only now it is consumption fetishism in which the status hierarchy among objects consumed hides the class hierarchy between humans. The practices of consumption are organized according to their own hierarchical logic that obscures the homologous hierarchy of class. Habitus, therefore, has a class character but it also transcends class — the class dimension is deeper and preconscious, the product of inculcation; whereas the shared dimension of habitus is more conscious and practical, organizing patterns of consumption in a relatively autonomous social space.[6] By focusing on the food one eats, the liquor one drinks, the paintings one appreciates, the films one watches, and by recognizing their implicit organization into hierarchies of legitimacy, Bourdieu contends, one overlooks the class domination that they simultaneously hide and

6 There is a burgeoning literature on the concept of habitus, an obscure but key concept in Bourdieu's oeuvre. Because it cannot be identified as such it can be used to explain any behavior. It raises the question of how much of action is conscious/reflexive, how much is unconscious/pre-reflexive, and then what is the relation between the two. Bourdieu doesn't help here so others have had to help themselves. Perhaps the most interesting advances have been made by proponents of a "dual process" model borrowed from cognitive psychology. See Omar Lizardo, "The Cognitive Origins of Bourdieu's Habitus," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 34, no. 4 (2004): 375–401; Stephen Vaisey, "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action," *American Journal of Sociology* 114, no. 6 (2009): 1675–1715; Omar Lizardo, Robert Mowry, Brandon Sepulvado, Dustin S. Stoltz, Marshall A. Taylor, Justin Van Ness, and Michael Wood, "What Are Dual Process Models? Implications for Cultural Analysis in Sociology," *Sociological Theory* 34, no. 4 (2016): 287–310. These authors make a Distinction between reflexive action that requires slow, conceptual processes of symbolic mastery and the pre-reflexive spontaneous, impulsive action based on accumulated, embodied processes developing over a long period of time. Focusing on symbolic domination, I have sliced Bourdieu in a different way: an internalization process that is unconscious and a game-like interaction that works at a more conscious level. Bourdieu arbitrarily switches from one perspective to the other without connecting the two. Missing is a theory of the dynamic interplay between the conscious and the unconscious.

express. This is symbolic domination at work — a domination that is hidden, that is not recognized as such, that is, in short, misrecognized.

Still, Riley is right, there is a puzzle: what does Bourdieu mean by class? This is a challenging puzzle indeed — so much so that Marx died trying to solve it. By the end of *Distinction*, Bourdieu, escapes the morass of convoluted definitions of class (which Riley bravely tries to disentangle) by claiming that class is neither given nor some invention of sociologists, but the outcome and object of a *classification struggle*. Paradoxically, however, he can only get the classification struggle going by assuming the existence of class. Despite his attack on the idea of "classes on paper," that is classes defined abstractly by the theorist, he himself *assumes* from the beginning a Marxist tripartite division between dominant class, petty bourgeoisie, and working class. But even as he borrows Marxist class *categories*, Bourdieu departs from the Marxist notion of class as a *relation* by defining them, instead as the summation of economic and cultural *resources* (capital).

A number of points are noteworthy. First, this a Weberian stratification model of class based on a hierarchy of strata, as opposed to the notion of class domination as a relation of exploitation — a concept that appears almost nowhere in Bourdieu's theoretical oeuvre. Second, there is no way to access a metric (or exchange rate) that allows one to add up cultural and economic capital, so the volume of capital eludes measurement. Third, Bourdieu stops at classification struggle that takes place within the dominant class and never moves forward (or backward) to class struggle, eliminating it by fiat.

Finally, it means that professors, intellectuals, and artists turn out to be part of the dominant class, albeit a dominated fraction with high cultural capital compensating for low economic capital. Here Bourdieu is borrowing from the well-known formulation of Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*:

> The division of labor … manifests itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and manual labour, so that inside this class one part

> appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood), while the others' attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of the class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves.[7]

But Bourdieu takes the idea further than Marx and Engels. Those "conceptive ideologists" who perfect "the illusion of class about itself" are an autonomous fraction of the dominant class whose function is to define the very meaning of class. They are far more powerful than Marx and Engels' ideologists who only "perfect" and elaborate the prior self-understanding of the bourgeoisie.

If at the beginning of *Distinction*, Bourdieu simply asserts the definition of class as an objective entity, by the end he insists on class as an indeterminate product of classification struggles. That being the case, *Distinction* should itself be seen as a contribution not only to the understanding of class but also to a classification struggle, an attempt to project intellectuals, including prominent sociologists, as part of the dominant class.[8] More broadly, one might say that *Distinction* is not only a work of science that advances the concept of symbolic domination, but also part of a political project to put intellectuals on the road to class power. To sustain such a claim, however, requires a theory of intellectuals as key agents of social change.

7 Robert Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 173.

8 Within *Distinction*, Bourdieu seems to follow the intellectual journey that Durkheim makes from his *Division of Labor in Society*, where the scientist observes the world from without, to *Elementary Forms of Religious Experience* where the scientist is now located within society and science is seen as performing an analogous role to religion.

Social Change — From Algeria to France

When it comes to Bourdieu's theory of social change, the obvious place to begin are his early writings on Algeria. In *Algeria 1960*, Bourdieu[9] describes social change as the product of colonialism depicted as an unexplained exogenous intervention — a clash of civilizations, or a clash between modernity and tradition. Here he also revises Weber's characterization of the modern bourgeois individual as embodying the spirit of capitalism, the rational pursuit of an irrational goal — accumulation for accumulation's sake, money for money's sake — and an ethic of abstention, self-denial. For Bourdieu, in contrast, the modern individual is defined by a distinctive sense of time. Unlike cyclical time of traditional society in which the future is embedded in the present, always "forthcoming," the uncertainty of modern society leads to the conceptualization of an alternative future through prophecy, planning, and rationality. Already here, Bourdieu gives modernity an intellectualist bent.

This also leads Bourdieu to recognize the revolutionary potential of the colonial working class. Its relative stability allows it to imagine and direct its efforts toward an alternative future whereas the volcanic sub-proletariat and proletarianized peasantry have no sense of direction — they are a "force for revolution," not a "revolutionary force."[10] In "Revolution within the Revolution,"[11] Bourdieu extends the "revolutionary" potential of the colonized. Here change is not exogenously induced but endogenous to colonialism bringing about its own downfall. Colonialism creates its own gravediggers — the colonized — who demand the rights denied them. In the war against colonialism, the colonized thus transform themselves into a modernizing movement.

9 Bourdieu, *Algeria 1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979[1963]).

10 Bourdieu distinguishes his view of the working class as revolutionary from the "eschatological vision of revolution as a reversal" (*Algeria 1960*, 62). He explicitly opposes the position of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) that claims the peasantry to be the revolutionary class, a view celebrated by Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963 [1961]).

11 Bourdieu, *The Algerians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962 [1961], chapter 7.

This "dialectical" conception of social transformation acts as a counterpoint to Bourdieu's theory of symbolic domination in which the dominated never achieve collective self-awareness, let alone revolutionary momentum. His description of the anti-colonial revolution stands in opposition not only to his analysis of contemporary France[12] but also to his anthropology of the Algerian ethnic group, the Kabyle. Thus, in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*,[13] published a decade after leaving Algeria, Bourdieu elaborates a static tradition-bound vision of Kabyle as the foundation of his understanding of modern France. Not urban Algiers but a romanticized rural Kabylia — insulated from history, colonialism, and the wider world — provides the elementary forms of symbolic domination that Bourdieu discovers in France. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu has already advanced his key concepts – habitus, misrecognition, and symbolic capital – to analyze a society governed by honor, rituals of mutual aid, and hierarchies of solidarity. This framework is then superimposed on France but with one difference — social differentiation, represented by the crystallization of relatively autonomous fields.

Bourdieu argues that the laborious interpersonal work of symbolic domination in traditional societies becomes, in modern societies, a symbolic domination organized through impersonal, specialized institutions. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*[14] shows how this works in schooling. The primary socialization of children in the family gives (or denies) them the cultural capital to perform well (or badly) in school. The curriculum is designed to match the symbolic mastery learned in the middle and upper classes, so that such children do well

12 More out of desperation than the realpolitik of reason, in the last decade of his life Bourdieu does appeal to social movements to arrest France's headlong plunge into neoliberalism. But his politics is ahead of his theory — as Riley points out, Bourdieu has no theory of collective mobilization. It is a curious return of the repressed — his early interest in the anti-colonial revolution.

13 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977[1972]).

14 Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage, 1977 [1970]).

at school while those endowed only with practical mastery fail. The institutional separation of schooling from the family, that is, its relative autonomy, gives symbolic mastery universal legitimacy so that children from the dominant classes appear to be gifted, while children from the dominated accept their lesser destiny as a product of their lesser talent. Success in school translates into success in the (again, institutionally separated) labor market, which also appears to operate according to class-neutral rules. In this way the technical function of school (slotting people into jobs) hides its social function (reproducing class domination). Schools secure participation by obscuring their class foundations.

The parallels with Durkheim are obvious. The Kabyle play the same role for symbolic domination as the Australian totemic tribes play for Durkheim's elementary forms of religious life; and Bourdieu subscribes to the same modernization theory based on social differentiation that is most fully elaborated in Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society*. As in Durkheim so in Bourdieu the sociologist holds the secret of society, only with symbolic domination replacing solidarity as the key concept.

Social Reproduction — From the Béarn to the Grandes Écoles

Theories of social change begin with theories of social reproduction. Thus, Marx shows how the reproduction of capitalist relations is simultaneously their transformation. In order to earn a livelihood, workers are compelled to sell their labor power to a capitalist for whom they expend labor that (re)produces both themselves (necessary labor equivalent to the wage) and the capitalist (surplus labor which is the source of profit). At the same time, capitalists compete with each other and in so doing transform the work process through intensification, deskilling, new technology, multiple-earner families, etc., that leads to the polarization of wealth and poverty. That in turn leads, on the one side, to crises of overproduction, the concentration of capital, and the falling rate of profit and, on the other side, to the deepening of class struggle.

Social reproduction is simultaneously social transformation. Is there anything like this in Bourdieu?

As we have seen, Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction is drawn from an idyllic conception of Kabylia where habitus and social structure reproduce each other.

> The habitus, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus.[15]

Understood as a set of embodied and embedded "transposable" dispositions that generate practices and appreciations in various settings, habitus is "durably" formed in early life and largely irreversible. It has a certain, unspecified rigidity that can obstruct adaptation to new situations, an obstruction Bourdieu calls "hysteresis." Thus, when a habitus cultivated in one world comes up against social structures of another world, there is a certain "strain" and the actor enters a state of "allodoxia," or confusion.[16] (Durkheim might call it anomie.) The Kabyle cook wanders from job to job in Algiers not because he is trying to maximize opportunities nor because he is denied the possibility of stable employment, but because he cannot adapt to the norms of urban life, being dragged down by his rural habitus.[17] In this case, strain is produced through the clash of social structure with an *exogenously* produced habitus.

While Bourdieu's theory of reproduction through the inculcation

15 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 78.

16 At other points, Bourdieu argues that the clash of position and disposition can lead to heightened reflexivity and "rational" action.

17 Pierre Bourdieu, "Making the economic habitus: Algerian workers revisited," *Ethnography* 1, no. 1 (2000):17–41.

of habitus points to the ubiquity of such strain, we do not know where this leads: to retreat (downgrading or repression of expectations), making a virtue of necessity, apathy, rebellion, or even innovation? The ubiquity of strain becomes a theory of social change only when we understand its *effects*. That would require a psychology of the malleability of habitus and a sociology of the resilience of social structure — both of which are absent.[18]

So far I'm on the same page as Riley: Bourdieu's notion of social change is unconvincing. But does Bourdieu's oeuvre prefigure another theory of social reproduction/transformation? I think so, but it relies less on the notion of habitus. In its fullest form it can be found in *The Bachelors' Ball*,[19] where Bourdieu shows how the reproduction of the kinship structure leads to its demise. Bourdieu conceives of kinship as a card game in which each family is dealt a hand of children of a particular age and gender, defining the basis of marriage strategies. Given the expanding access to education, consumption, and employment beyond peasant society, all of which are especially appealing to young women next to the drudgery of peasant life, mothers try to maximize the family patrimony by marrying off their sons to local girls while encouraging their daughters to marry out of the village. A prisoners' dilemma game ensues resulting in peasant men no longer finding wives to reproduce their patrimony. Bourdieu describes this increasing gap between hopes and possibilities as leading to the humiliation of bachelors. He begins *The Bachelors' Ball* with his bachelors lined up along the edge of the ballroom. Occasionally they are invited to dance by a pitying neighbor, whereupon they clumsily parade their bodies. But they mainly watch their potential brides entranced by the guys from

18 Bourdieu is no nearer to explaining specific outcomes than was Robert Merton in his famous 1938 essay, which discusses the range of responses to the gap between institutionalized means and cultural goals: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion. See Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," *American Sociological Review* 3, no. 5 (1938): 672–82.

19 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Bachelors' Ball* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008 [2002]).

town. All this bodily shame reflects the degradation of the peasant economy. Here the response to the gap between hopes and possibilities, aspirations and opportunities, is retreat and despair — so different from the response of the colonized, also harboring aspirations at odds with opportunities, who rise up against colonialism. Nowhere does Bourdieu explain or even acknowledge the contrast between (internal or external) exit and voice.

The demise of the peasant world fits well with Bourdieu's broader view of history as marked by the ascendancy of education as a vehicle for class reproduction. Inheritance is now mediated indirectly through the relatively autonomous sphere of education, rather than directly through the family as in the peasant economy or feudal society. Bourdieu's two books on schooling written with Jean-Claude Passeron[20] show how, through the mediation of cultural capital, classes pass on their position to their children. Later, in *Homo Academicus*[21] and *Distinction*, Bourdieu shows how the insatiable demand for education leads to the expansion of higher education, devaluing the credential so that student aspirations are no longer in line with their opportunities. The democratization of access to secondary education in the 1980s, again *endogenous*, produces a gap between expectations and achievement.[22]

In *State Nobility*,[23] however, we find another "reproductive" role for education in the *longue durée.* In this exhausting and exhaustive empirical analysis, Bourdieu shows how the Grandes Écoles become the instrument for reproducing the dominant class. As the higher reaches of education become the transmission belt of inheritance — intellectuals, and especially the professoriate, become the guardians and gatekeepers

20 Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage, 1977 [1970]); *The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relation to Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979 [1964]).

21 Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988 [1984]).

22 Pierre Bourdieu et al., *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999 [1993]), 421–6.

23 Bourdieu, *State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996 [1989]).

of the dominant class, justifying once again their membership in that class. So, while Bourdieu does not have a fully worked out theory of social change nor a theory of history that *explains* social differentiation, his sociologically inspired vision of historical continuity makes intellectuals crucial players not just in defining the boundaries of class but also in its reproduction.

II. RECUPERATION

Having pointed to the limits of Riley's demolition, this section recovers Bourdieu's project around symbolic domination, reflexivity, and public engagement — three dimensions that drive both his science and his politics.

Symbolic Domination — From Psychology to Sociology

It is one thing to describe the strategies designed to reproduce the *dominant class*, it is another to understand the reproduction of *class domination*, which for Bourdieu revolves around symbolic domination. As we have already seen, this concept ties together class analysis, social change, and social reproduction. While Riley rejects the concept as unable to play the central role Bourdieu assigns it, I regard it as posing Bourdieu's most serious challenge to Marxism — a challenge that must be met, not dismissed.

Symbolic domination has a Marxist ring — it is domination that is not recognized as such, domination misrecognized. At first glance it bears a close relation to the notion of false consciousness, but Bourdieu is most insistent on its difference.

> In the notion of "false consciousness" which some Marxists invoke to explain the effect of symbolic domination, it is the word "consciousness" which is excessive; and to speak of "ideology" is to place in the order of *representations*, capable of being transformed by the

> intellectual conversion that is called the "awakening of consciousness," what belongs to the order of *beliefs*, that is, at the deepest level of bodily dispositions.[24]

Class domination is not simply the product of entry into compulsory social relations, as in Marx, but deeply embedded and embodied, and very difficult to expose. The dispositions of our habitus are unconscious and enduring. Whereas for Marx, individuals are the immediate effects of the relations they *presently occupy*, for Bourdieu they are the cumulative effect of the history of the social structures they *have occupied*. For Marx, relations take precedence over the individual; for Bourdieu, there is a tension between the structured habitus of the individual and the structured social relations they enter, even as they also reproduce each other.

With regard to symbolic domination, therefore, Bourdieu might rightly claim some distance from Marx,[25] but he systematically overlooks or denies parallels between his own work and the writings of Marxism, especially Western Marxism. He reduces Marxism to Marx, refusing to recognize the development of a rich Marxist intellectual tradition beyond Marx concerned with questions of cultural domination. For example, Gramsci's concept of hegemony also contests the idea of "false consciousness": it is an obvious counterpart to symbolic domination, but we find no serious acknowledgement of such parallels.[26] Another example is the Frankfurt School, which adopted psychoanalysis to highlight the internalization of oppression — the squashing of the autonomous bourgeois individual characteristic of advanced capitalism. Herbert Marcuse's

24 Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000 [1997]), 177. Italics in the original.

25 Pierre Bourdieu, "Social space and the genesis of 'classes'" in *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991 [1984]), 229–51.

26 Elsewhere I have examined the parallels and divergences between Bourdieu and Gramsci at length. See Burawoy, "The Roots of Domination: Beyond Bourdieu and Gramsci," *Sociology* 46, no. 2 (2012): 187–206; Burawoy and Karl von Holdt, *Conversations with Bourdieu* (Johannesburg; University of Witwatersrand Press, 2012), 51–67.

Eros and Civilization,[27] is a brilliant critical appropriation of Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* with a view to understanding capitalist oppression and the possibility of its transcendence. Without so much as a nod in the direction of the Frankfurt School, Bourdieu frequently employs psychoanalytic terms to convey the idea of habitus, though without ever engaging the theoretical baggage of psychoanalysis.[28]

Lukács's theory of reification offers still another parallel to Bourdieu's symbolic domination. Reification affects the dominant class as it does the dominated class, but whereas the dominant class has no interest in seeing through reification to the deepening crises it generates, the dominated class has an interest in but not the capacity to see the truth of the totality.[29] To arouse the working class Lukács appeals to extraneous interventions: the communist party, the dislocation of crisis, or the alienation of the laborer's body that liberates the mind.[30] Here and there Bourdieu offers similar openings[31]: symbolic revolutions, crises in which intellectuals can transmit their visions, martial counter-training of the body, but, like reification, they are incidental next to the heavy weight of symbolic domination.

So what is this symbolic domination? Here there is profound ambiguity. At the phenomenal level Bourdieu discusses processes of naturalization in which what exists comes to be accepted as inevitable, the way things are, unalterable like the weather. The distinction of the dominant classes is simply accepted as a natural attribute (gift) of that class. This fatalism can be extended, especially among the dominated, into making a virtue of necessity — the love of one's destiny, *amor fati*.

27 Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

28 With the analogy of the patient's resistance to the therapist, Bourdieu refers to sociology as socioanalysis, thereby explaining (or explaining away) the popular resistance to the claims of the sociologist.

29 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (London: Merlin Press, 1967 [1923]).

30 The same argument is made by Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 309. This would appear to be very different from Bourdieu, who refuses the possibility of the mind separating from the body, downplaying the significance of reflexive consciousness.

31 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 105, 172, 188.

For Bourdieu, by themselves, these processes of naturalization are unstable; their durability resides in an underlying symbolic domination that comes in two versions whose interrelationship Bourdieu leaves open, arbitrarily appealing to one or the other as it suits his argument. First, there is the idea that symbolic domination operates through the forging of a largely unconscious habitus as the internalization of social structure. In this way, the dominant categories through which social life is organized come to be unconsciously accepted. Domination is not recognized as such, it is *misrecognized*. Masculine domination, for example, is the result of the historical labor of dehistoricization.[32] It goes along with a *psychology* of inculcation that expresses itself in bodily comportment as well as psychic reflexes. Early socialization takes precedence, upon which is superimposed secondary socialization. Internalization proceeds without resistance, and, for the most part, gives rise to an integrated, singular self.

While in this first version of symbolic domination, the individual takes precedence, in the second version, more like Marx, social relations take precedence. Instead of individuals *misrecognizing* domination as a result of socialization and the creation of an unconscious habitus, social relations *mystify* the conditions of their own effectivity. In the latter case, symbolic domination is not the result of elaborate socialization but comes about through participation in semi-autonomous fields — participation that is viewed as a social game. Through their absorption in the game players accept its rules as given and become oblivious to the conditions of its reproduction. Here the integrated habitus with its stratified layers, rising from the deep and unconscious to the superficial and conscious, should be replaced with a more fluid self, what Lahire[33] calls a "plural self," responsive to different sets of social relations. This social game approach to practice is Bourdieu's more original, *sociological* perspective on symbolic domination.[34]

32 Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001 [1998]).

33 Bernard Lahire, *The Plural Actor* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011 [2001]).

34 Where I distinguish two divergent meanings of symbolic domination, Bourdieu

Riley is skeptical that the game metaphor can be applied to different realms of social life. Thus, he explicitly contests its application to work. Yet, as much research has shown, and as anyone who has worked in a monotonous and arduous job knows, the best way to survive is to give it meaning by constituting work as a game — a game whose outcomes are neither too uncertain as to be beyond human control nor too certain as to fail to command their attention.[35] Bourdieu and Passeron's[36] account of education can also be read as a social game: schools *secure* the participation of students through holding out achievable goals of economic advancement while at the same time *obscuring* the reproduction of class.[37] Of course, if the goals appear unachievable or are too easily achieved then the game can turn into rebellion. Bourdieu's oft-repeated example of gift exchange also has the structure of a game in which gifts are exchanged only after a decent interval, thereby concealing gift exchange as a mechanism of symbolic domination. In this view of symbolic domination, there

(1997 [2000]) tries to make them inseparable. In making the inculcation of habitus integral to social game-playing Bourdieu renders his theory of practice heavily deterministic. For a superb and succinct discussion of the distinction between these two views, see Ofer Sharone, *Flawed System/Flawed Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 186–90. As ever, Bourdieu is not interested in discriminating among causal explanations but in holding on to multiple explanations. In trying to explain everything, he risks explaining nothing.

35 Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Jeffrey Sallaz, "The House Rules: Autonomy and Interests among Service Workers in the Contemporary Casino Industry," *Work and Occupations* 29, no. 4 (2002): 394–427; Ofer Sharone, "Engineering overwork: Bell-curve management at a high-tech firm" in Cynthia Fuchs Epstein and Arne L. Kalleberg, eds., *Fighting for Time: Shifting Boundaries of Work and Social Life* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 191–208; Ofer Sharone, *Flawed System/Flawed Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Rachel Sherman, *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Adam Reich, *Hidden Truth: Young Men Navigating Lives in and out of Juvenile Prison.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

36 Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture.*

37 Here one might distinguish between *habitus* that is a feature of internalization and *cultural capital* which is a resource mobilized in social games. I haven't found a place where Bourdieu distinguishes between the two in much the same way that he does not distinguish between the two types of symbolic domination.

is no need for an elaborate theory of internalization. Misrecognition becomes mystification, intrinsic to the social relations into which we enter.

Arguing that education is not the only sphere of symbolic domination, Riley goes on to ask why Bourdieu omits the realm of democracy. He's right. Bourdieu ignores electoral politics and civil society to his detriment, believing that real politics is confined to the lofty field of power where elites compete with one another, according to a well-defined set of rules. Adopting Adam Przeworski's[38] analysis of capitalist democracy, Riley contends that electoral competition is a critical realm for the organization of consent to capitalism.

But Przeworski's analysis is also based on a game-theoretic logic. Parties compete for votes by developing rule-bound strategies that are based on their assessment of class structure. So socialist parties are drawn into the electoral game because failure to do so would cost them vital support — support based on the delivery of real but limited short-term material gains. The trouble is, there are never enough workers for socialist parties to win elections, so they seek allies from neighboring classes and, thereby, dilute their socialist platform. One interesting result is that class struggle is first a struggle over the meaning of class — a Bourdieusian classification struggle — and only then a struggle between classes. A second result is the sacrifice of long-term goals for short-term gains. A third result is the organization of consent to capitalism: partaking in the game results in consent to its rules.

In the language of games, players accumulate resources and follow strategies within rules they accept but don't make. To be sure, as Bourdieu notes, players can become conscious of the rules, and struggle over their revision, yet the changing of rules is itself rule-bound. The game metaphor not only allows us to think simultaneously about agency

38 Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

and structure, but it offers us something else: a methodology that helps us think about the relationship of social science and lived experience, logic of theory and the logic of practice. Threading throughout Bourdieu's work is the double truth of social existence: the truth of the actor, absorbed in the game, and the truth of the observer, examining the conditions of the game's existence. Both truths are essential — the logic of practice and the logic of theory — but only the sociologist can connect the two.

The sociologist studies how actors reproduce social structure without acknowledging that they are doing precisely that. Hence the double break: the sociologist first breaks from the common sense of the participant to the underlying truth of social structure. But there must also be a second break back to the perspective of the participants to understand how they reproduce the underlying structures that the sociologist has discovered, be it the world of surplus value or symbolic domination. Thus, the logic of practice and the logic of theory are intimately connected, but in a way that is obscure to the participant. Here lies the originality of Bourdieu's game theory of reproduction: how actors secure domination while simultaneously obscuring that domination from themselves.

The game metaphor opens a door to understanding the relation between structure and agency; it allows us to think about social reproduction as simultaneously a process of social transformation; it gives insight into the organization of consent as well as misrecognition. It is based on a methodology that gives weight to both the logic of practice and the logic of theory, posing the question of the relation between the two. It raises the fundamental question of how the social scientist can have a deeper insight into the world than the participant. In short, it demands a theory of reflexivity, a challenge that Bourdieu tackles head on.

Reflexivity — the Superiority of Sociology

Having suggested that Bourdieu does not have anything to offer by way of science, Riley argues that his appeal must lie in the way his social theory resonates with the lived experience and interests of elite academics — the struggle for distinction and the defense of privilege. Another source of his appeal is an ersatz politics that substitutes critical sociology for connection to popular forces. Here, Riley's sociology of knowledge actually converges with Bourdieu's own theory of the production of science, but with a difference. Whereas Riley's sociology of knowledge entirely replaces Bourdieu's theory, Bourdieu's sociology of knowledge is only a part of his scientific theory. Thus, for Bourdieu, a good social science requires knowledge of the context of the production of knowledge, not to relativize and dismiss its knowledge claims (as in Riley) but to improve them. Here Bourdieu is ahead of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim who make little pretense to account for their own theories and their credibility other than as *deus ex machina* or a mirror of wider historical processes.

If we accept the psychological version of symbolic domination, that deep internalization makes it impossible to recognize the world for what it is, then there is no reason to believe that social scientists are more able to escape misrecognition than anyone else. That rules out the very possibility of science. But the sociological version of symbolic domination — the one that Bourdieu[39] actually adopts when he describes the scientific field — means we have to study the conditions and games that distinguish the scientist from the layperson. The conditions that allow scientists to produce knowledge lie in their privileged existence, what Bourdieu[40] calls *skholè*, a world free of the pressures of material necessity that creates the possibility of competition within the scientific field — a field governed by the interest in disinterestedness. One

39 Pierre Bourdieu, "The specificity of the scientific field and the social conditions of the progress of reason," *Social Science Information* 14, no. 6 (1975): 19–47.

40 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations.*

might say, as Riley does echoing Bourdieu, that scientists engage in a struggle for distinction, seeking recognition from one another. In the scientific field, producers are also the consumers, requiring, therefore, the defense of its autonomy against threats from within and without. As Bourdieu relates in *On Television*[41]: on the one hand, scientific pretenders and popularizers, doxosophers, usurp the role of scientist from without by producing an imitation science; on the other hand, there is subversion from within by those who seek celebrity status by colluding with those same doxosophers.

Skholè and competition for distinction are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the advance of social science. Unaware of the conditions of the production of their own knowledge, many disciplines suffer from scholastic fallacies — a form of false consciousness. Such practitioners are unaware that the knowledge they produce reflects the social conditions of its authors and not the objects of their science. Thus, according to Bourdieu, the economists with their utilitarian models, anthropologists with their structuralist models, or philosophers with their deliberative models are handicapped by their misrecognition of the conditions of their own production of knowledge. They mistakenly think people are actually utilitarian or deliberative in the way that their models suggest they should be. But sociologists, at least of the Bourdieusian stripe, by virtue of their simultaneous immersion in the world of science and their engagement with the world of the participant, recognize the distinction between their own logic of theory and the participants' logic of practice.

According to Bourdieu,[42] Marxist intellectuals are especially guilty of committing scholastic fallacies, unreflective about their own position that generates dispositions very different from those of the working class with which they identify. The Marxist intellectualistic disposition leads them to regard the conditions of the working class as unbearable and, thus, to anticipate revolution; whereas, in reality, workers themselves

41 Bourdieu, *On Television* (New York: New Press, 1999 [1996]).

42 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 373–4.

learn to accept those conditions, making a virtue of necessity. So, for Bourdieu it is important that the intellectual-academic not only secure a privileged autonomy but *recognize* that privileged autonomy by engaging with the practice of those not so privileged. Far from being an ersatz politics, Bourdieu offers us a real politics, as real as any academic Marxist; but it is a politics of intellectuals.

Public Sociology — Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power

Bourdieu[43] makes no bones about his political project — the forging of an "international of intellectuals" — the organic intellectual of humanity. The interest of intellectuals is to represent their interests as the interests of all, captured in Bourdieu's idea of the "corporatism of the universal" — a recognition that intellectuals have a particular interest, but it is a particular interest in the universal. Writing of the realpolitik of reason in *Pascalian Meditations*, Bourdieu[44] argues that our best chance for the advance of universality and for universal access to the conditions of universality is to work through the state. Although the state can be an instrument of capitalist domination, Bourdieu clings to its potential for approaching universality. Its internal logic, whether of its bureaucracies or of the law, incentivizes its incumbents to strive for equality and inclusion. Even though he sees the field of power as dominating representative state organs, he also sees this same field as progressive to the extent that it becomes autonomous and approximates the scientific field of open and equal competition. Here Bourdieu inherits Hegel, and more generally, the optimism of enlightenment thinking.

This is Bourdieu, the traditional intellectual, standing on Mount Olympus with fellow intellectuals, disseminating the truth behind

43 Pierre Bourdieu, "The corporatism of the universal: The role of intellectuals in the modern world," *Telos* 81 (1989): 99–110; 1996 [1992]; Bourdieu, *Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996 [1992]), 337–48.

44 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 122–7.

symbolic domination. But Bourdieu also maintained close connections to the dominated. Throughout his life he engaged with the dominated classes: in Algeria, in the Béarn, and in the most interesting of his public interventions, his ambitious interview project, *The Weight of the World*.[45] Here, he and his colleagues constitute themselves as organic intellectuals in close connection with blue-collar workers, clerical workers, teachers, social workers, and judges, traders, immigrants, and youth. The interviewers are sociologists conversant with the life-worlds of the interviewees. Through extended interactions they become, in Bourdieu's words, the midwives of truth. Whereas in his theoretical writings, the dominated classes suffer from misrecognition, now they are presented as seeing the world with sociological insights. The interviewers (most of them sociologists and including Bourdieu himself) offer a sociological account of the interviews they conducted without recourse to such notions as misrecognition or habitus. Here the Bourdieusian lexicon has evaporated and the respondents' renditions of their lives coincide with the accounts of the sociologists.

Could it be that their lucidity derives from the "Socratic method" of the in-depth interview — an understanding that is the joint product of interviewer and interviewee? That would suggest that symbolic domination is not opaque and thus not of the psychological type. Or is it that the conditions of precarity already in the 1980s led to a very different picture than the one painted in *Distinction*: the middle classes don't exhibit petty bourgeois emulation but an inventive resistance to bureaucratic strictures while the working class is as likely to exhibit self-conscious struggle as passive adaptation. Again, this points to symbolic domination that is situational — the sociology of mystification rather than the psychology of misrecognition.

The Weight of the World may represent a shift in class portraits, but it also coincides with a shift in Bourdieu's own political orientation. It is the beginning of his more open political engagement on the side of the

45 Bourdieu et al., *The Weight of the World.*

dominated, joining and encouraging strikers, supporting social movements of the unemployed, writing scathing critiques of French socialist governments and neoliberalism. His political salvos in two collections of essays on the tyranny of the market, along with *The Weight of the World* represent a final phase of intellectuals on the road to class power, when intellectuals represent their interests as the interests of all. [46]

These phases in the intellectuals' ascent to power coincide with the phases of Bourdieu's own career. In his early writings on France — *Reproduction* and *Distinction* — he seeks to establish the distinctive place of the sociologist as scientist. Here Bourdieu develops the unique science of sociology — at that time a moribund discipline in France — centering on symbolic domination, the cement that holds society together. As a science competing with other sciences, its status is measured by its *inaccessibility* to all but the initiated.

Once established as the theorist of symbolic domination, sociologists can presume to represent the interests of all intellectuals, defending cultural production in toto. This second phase of intellectuals on the road to class power coincides with Bourdieu's election to an exalted professorship in the Collège de France, allowing him to move from representing a segment of the intellectual stratum to representing the stratum as a whole. From being the vanguard of sociologists, Bourdieu seeks to make sociologists the vanguard of intellectuals as a whole.

The third and final phase, the hegemonic phase, occurs when Bourdieu presents intellectuals as representing the interests of all — a move that calls for a far more sympathetic view of the dominated. He now dignifies them with a rationality corresponding to their subjugation, rather than pejoratively describing them as blinded by habitus, allodoxia and misrecognition, and bereft of cultural capital. Starting with *The Weight of the World*, the last ten years of Bourdieu's life were, indeed, devoted to intellectuals aspiring to power, standing at the head of social

46 Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market* (New York: New Press, 1998 [1998]), and *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market* (New York: New Press, 2003 [2001]).

movements to combat a deepening neoliberalism. As he writes in *On Television*, the intellectual must pay not only an "entry fee" to acquire expertise in science or art that excludes the dilettante but also an "exit duty" — the obligation to speak to and for all. In his later years, Bourdieu did gather around him a group of internationally distinguished intellectuals who defended social justice and human rights.[47]

III. CRITIQUE

Having recuperated Bourdieu's theory, we come now to the point of critique, an account of its limitations, separating the wheat from the chaff, appropriating what might be incorporated into Marxism, and responding to the challenge it poses.

Misrecognizing Capitalism

Like Riley, I believe that a major flaw in Bourdieu's oeuvre is his suppression of the concept and reality of capitalism. In his own terms, Bourdieu misrecognizes capitalism, i.e., does not recognize it as such. Thus, when he rails against neoliberalism, as he does in the 1990s until his death, he does not see it as a necessary effect of a particular phase of capitalism, its contradictions and its dynamics. His vision of society is one of differentiated fields that congeal in a hierarchical space, but there is no theory that connects and assembles the fields into a totality — capitalism or any other totality. As Gil Eyal[48] has pointed out, for all his interest in relations *within* fields Bourdieu has little to say about the relations *among* fields. To be sure, he recognizes the domination of the economic field, but offers no theory of its means of domination or its internal structure.

47 These three phases correspond to Antonio Gramsci's (1971, 180–2) three phases of class formation.

48 Gil Eyal, "Spaces between Fields" in Philip Gorski, ed., *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 158–82.

There is a second consequence of the misrecognition of capitalism. It is Bourdieu's failure to develop a comparative analysis that would give historical specificity to his concepts, especially symbolic domination. From the beginning, he was skeptical of comparative analysis, preferring homologies, analogies, and commonalities to the explanation of differences.[49] For example, Bourdieu[50] would make connections between Kabylia and the Béarn, claiming that his experience in the one influenced his understanding of the other, yet he never made a systematic comparison of these two peasant societies. That might have led him to discover how symbolic domination operates differently in Algeria and France, even distinguishing domination in the colony from that in the metropolis.

Take the question of intellectuals on the road to class power, which comes from the famous work by Konrád and Szelényi.[51] They claimed that in state socialism the dominant class performed the intellectual function of teleological redistributor, that is, the role of the planner who appropriates and then redistributes goods and services. The planners' job is to define the needs of society and how they should be realized — the function of an intellectual. Of course, it is one thing to say planners perform an intellectual function and another to claim that intellectuals, defined by their specialization in the production of ideas and techniques, actually occupy such a dominant position. In the economic reforms of the 1970s across Eastern Europe, Konrád and Szelényi envisioned intellectuals arriving at their destiny, their true place in society.

But that was not to be.[52] Instead of intellectuals ascending into command positions, the entire order dissolved. The central appropriation

49 See Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Passeron, and Jean-Claude Chamboredon, *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991 [1968]), Part II.

50 Bourdieu, 2003 [2000] "Participant Objectivation," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9 (2003 [2000]): 281–94.

51 György Konrád and Iván Szelényi, *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

52 See Gil Eyal, Ivan Szelényi, and Eleanor Townsley, *Making Capitalism without*

and redistribution of surplus was overt and therefore assured through some combination of force and legitimation that often followed each other in cyclical fashion. This proved to be a precarious way of sustaining domination — making legitimate claims for socialism encouraged dissent, which only intensified when force was applied.[53]

The stability of advanced capitalism and the instability of state socialism cannot be attributed to processes of socialization, as this was as intensive and systematic in state socialism as in advanced capitalism. In explaining the difference, we might do better to consider the structure of these two societies and the social games they generate. Advanced capitalism possesses a relatively open and autonomous civil society that effectively absorbs and diverts practices into self-contained institutions (or fields in Bourdieu's terms). Each institution organizes its own distinctive game or games — defined by taken-for-granted assumptions (*illusio*) and guiding principles (*nomos*). If advanced capitalism is distinguished by its civil society, it might follow that symbolic domination is a phenomenon of advanced capitalism, at least in regard to the game-metaphoric conception of social structure. In state socialism there is only a limited civil society and, moreover, one that superimposes a game-like structure defined by the party state. There's no concealing class domination. For Bourdieu, however, symbolic domination is of universal validity, it has no historical limits. It is a general theory of social order without a corresponding particular theory of particular societies. It is unverifiable and unfalsifiable.

Returning to the question of intellectuals, if they are on the road to class power under state socialism, what is their position under capitalism? Szelényi himself argued that, in contrast to state socialism,

Capitalists: The New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe (New York: Verso Books, 1998). According to these authors it was only with the transition to capitalism that intellectuals finally ascended to power as managers of post-socialism. They describe this process using a Bourdieusian framework of the conversion of different forms of capital. But this, too, turned out to be a temporary aberration.

53 See Michael Burawoy and János Lukács, *The Radiant Past: Ideology and Reality in Hungary's Road to Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

under capitalism where private property rules and markets distribute, intellectuals play a subsidiary role. They hold a contradictory class position, as Erik Wright[54] once put it, divided in their allegiance between dominant and dominated classes. Once we introduce capitalism as the context for intellectuals, Bourdieu's project takes on an entirely different meaning. An international of intellectuals, seemingly autonomous from and even critical of the capitalist class, becomes an instrument of the reproduction of capitalism through its false universalization, reinforced by its failure to project an alternative beyond capitalism. In failing to give capitalism its due place in history, Bourdieu exaggerates the importance of intellectuals and the state — overlooking the multiple institutions that conspire to reproduce symbolic domination as mystification, starting with the capitalist economy itself but extending to all the institutions of civil society. One might say that in misrecognizing capitalism Bourdieu is committing his own scholastic fallacy, or even, scholastic fantasy.

The Capitalist University and the Popular Classes

In summary, like Marx, Weber, and Durkheim before him, the genius of Bourdieu lies in his theory of social reproduction, specifically his *theory of symbolic domination* — less the psychology of internalization and more the sociology of games. His theory of symbolic domination raises the question as to how it is that sociology excavates a truth inaccessible to the agents they study, but also more valid than the truth of neighboring disciplines. Here Bourdieu goes beyond the canon, throwing sociology back into the sociologist's face. He develops a *reflexive sociology* — a sociology of the scientific field that is rooted in his theory of symbolic domination. The sociologist works in a competitive field that incentivizes the advance of science, and that develops an interest in disinterestedness. This is the nature of all scientific fields, but

54 Erik Olin Wright, "Intellectuals and the Class Structure of Capitalist Society" in Pat Walker, ed., *Between Labor and Capital* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1978), 191–212.

sociology is special in that it does not commit the scholastic fallacy of mistaking the field of science for the world of the participant, the logic of theory for the logic of practice. Bourdieu asks how it is that everyday practices create a world which conforms to the social theory discovered in the "laboratory." Theory is incomplete if the sociologist does not understand how the practice of the subjects makes sociology both true and obscure. This is the third distinctive feature of his sociology — *engagement with the world of the participant*.

This is Bourdieu's science; the corresponding politics is that of intellectuals on the road to class power. It ascends from the narrow corporate interest of the sociologist, to a second level embracing the broader interest of intellectuals, to a third phase in which intellectuals represent the interests of all. This is broadly Bourdieu's strategy and trajectory. From a Marxist perspective it seems to be an illusory pursuit, ignoring the spontaneous reproduction of capitalism that takes place, above all, in the self-mystifying processes of production for profit as well as in the realm of civil society.

Bourdieu's challenge to Marxism lies in his intellectualist theory of knowledge — that truth is produced in artistic and scientific fields, each requiring a certain leisured existence, distant from material necessity. A Marxist theory of knowledge, by contrast, claims that truth is ultimately rooted in and tested by the experience of subjugation. Truth is the standpoint of the subaltern, even if it is produced elsewhere. In Antonio Gramsci's terms, for Bourdieu the common sense of the subaltern is entirely bad sense, whereas for Marxism the common sense of the subaltern contains a kernel of good sense, even if it is also subject to the distortions of ideology. In the Gramscian view, organic intellectuals exist to elaborate the good sense of the subaltern while traditional intellectuals create ideologies that justify and elicit participation in and consent to capitalism. Class struggle becomes a struggle between intellectuals, but on the terrain of subaltern experience. The more autonomous and critical traditional intellectuals appear to be, the more effective their representation of universality, but it is a false

universality as it obscures the fundamental strictures of capitalism.

For Bourdieu, therefore, the elite university is the golden hearth of the intellectual. Riley may be critical of Bourdieu's defense of the university and its autonomy, it being an appeal to "elite academics," but Riley, too, sees the university as somehow outside politics — true politics involves building a connection to popular forces beyond the academy. Is this because truth ultimately resides with those "popular forces"? In which case, he must confront the question of symbolic domination as it applies to those "popular forces." Or is it that the university is the fount of truth to be transmitted to the same popular forces? In which case he must deal with the question of reflexivity, the validity of knowledge produced in the university.

In the past we could speak of the *university in capitalist society*, hemmed in by all sorts of constraints but still a self-governing knowledge workshop, designed to enhance the public good. It could be conceived of as a "subject" with its own agency or an "object" manipulated by outside forces but, at its best, its internal structure was as close to a large-scale socialist cooperative as you'll find under capitalism. Today, however, we must conceive of the university as a set of social relations embedded in the wider society. More and more it is a *capitalist university* whose very structure mimics a capitalist corporation.[55]

As public funding is withdrawn, the university — the world over — becomes a profit center, cutting costs and creating revenues. It cuts costs through a vast array of strategies: from new digital technology that makes possible distance learning, to the expansion of contingent faculty and the steady decline (in numbers and in power) of faculty with security of employment, to an array of outsourcing arrangements,

55 This distinction between "university in capitalist society" and the "capitalist university" harks back to the parallel distinction in the Miliband–Poulantzas state debate. For Miliband the "state in capitalist society" could be deployed in the transition to socialism whereas for Poulantzas the "capitalist state," not being neutral, has to be destroyed and a new political structure installed as necessary for any transition to socialism. In parallel fashion, the "relatively autonomous university" of the past was more congruent with the principles of socialism than the emerging "capitalist university" of today.

whether to janitors or management consultants. On the other hand, it increases revenue by seeking funds from alumni interested in immortality by sponsoring new buildings or athletics, from industries such as pharmaceuticals seeking partnerships based on cheap graduate student research, and, most notably, by increasing student tuition and creating new degree programs that charge extortionate fees. All this is accomplished by an expanding administration bent on the proletarianization of university labor and the degradation of education, all disguised with corporate-speak. As the university becomes less hospitable to Bourdieu's autonomous scientific field, as its capitalist structure becomes transparent, Riley need only step outside his office to join those popular forces that inhabit the classrooms, laboratories, libraries, sports stadiums, and canteens.

In the US and elsewhere, the university is becoming a playground for the political right as well as the political left. The once-dominant liberal consensus is under assault from conservatives who no longer assume the university to be off-limits for their political projects. Small right-wing student cells with outside funding are abetting the invasion of campuses by extremist political forces. We can no longer imagine the university to be outside politics as both Riley and Bourdieu seem to believe — it is fast becoming a capitalist machine and a political battleground.

Defending its autonomy from enemy forces is still important, but increasingly the university is becoming its own terrain of struggle. It is still an arena for the production and reception of ideas, but the process of production has changed — faculty are losing control of their labor and of its products, while students are rapidly becoming indebted and desperate consumers. The class structure of the university is polarizing, and academics have a choice: to collaborate with the administrative class or side with dispossessed students and beleaguered staff.

Structure and superstructure are becoming one. As the university moves from an ivory tower to a key battleground over ideas, the struggle against pro-capitalist ideologies assumes greater urgency and renewed

vigor. The "autonomous" traditional intellectual is being squeezed out of existence, having now to take sides within as well as beyond the capitalist university — the claim of universality appears increasingly bogus. Anyone who examines the conditions of production of knowledge today cannot misrecognize capitalism. Bourdieusians of today must join the Marxist fold, just as Marxists must face symbolic domination in its capitalist incarnations.

A NOTE ON BOURDIEU'S SOCIOLOGY AS A COMBAT SPORT

This paper considers how to approach Bourdieu: ignore, demolish, or absorb. It is instructive to see how Bourdieu approaches his own intellectual foes. The title of Pierre Carles's 2002 film on Bourdieu — "La sociologie est un sport de combat" — expresses Bourdieu's often combative approach towards others for which he has achieved some infamy, especially in France.[56] We can say he pursues some combination of all three strategies — ignore, demolish, or absorb — varying with the academic game he is playing. As he developed a strategic use and nonuse of citations as a sign of recognition or nonrecognition of competitors, combat became part of his academic habitus. Compared to Talcott Parsons or Jürgen Habermas, who build on the shoulders of giants, Bourdieu tends to repress the shoulders on which he stands, so that he appears as the source of his own genius. He is well-known for appropriating the ideas of opponents without recognition. When the original author is well-known, he often turns them into an enemy, distorts their ideas in order to facilitate their demolition and, thereby, rise above them as a superior thinker. This is especially the case with regard to Marxism. Thus, he tries to hide his adoption of Althusserian structuralism — a point made by Riley — either by making no reference

56 The title "Sociology is a Combat Sport" was euphemistically translated into English as "Sociology is a Martial Art," no doubt to make it more palatable to the more professional orientation of academia in the US.

to the source or virulently attacking Althusser and his followers. Again Bourdieu's symbolic domination parallels hegemony, but he either ignores the parallel or dismisses Gramsci. Yet when it suits him, he cites Gramsci's critique of political parties. This strategy reaches a climax in his dismissal of Simone de Beauvoir. To hide the fact that *Masculine Domination* is a pale imitation of *The Second Sex*, he ignores Beauvoir's work except in a single footnote where he implies she did not possess a single original idea because she was in thrall to the symbolic domination of Sartre. It is ironic that, in a book devoted to exposing the way men silence women, Bourdieu should belittle and dismiss the author of this classic work on feminism. Not only Marxists are victims of this strategy: a similar fate befalls such figures as Robert Michels, Robert Merton, Basil Bernstein, and William Julius Wilson. One has to wonder whether this characteristic combination of appropriation and denunciation is a reaction to his own sense of marginality, manifested in his proclaimed cleft habitus? Or is it the way academic combat is typically played out in France? All this is emphatically not to say that Bourdieu did not have ideas of his own; nor is it to endorse a similar demolition strategy in dealing with his work. It is only to say that Bourdieu garnered some of his influence by carefully choosing whom and how to attack, whom and how to ignore, and, at times, whom and how to endorse. The opportunistic approach to intellectual enemies is carried on by the inheritors of the Bourdieusian mantle. ⊬

My article in *Catalyst* 1, no. 2 suggested that Bourdieu's theory is deeply flawed in the very areas that it is praised — the theory of reproduction, and the theory of social change. Heilbron and Steinmetz reject my argument in toto, while Burawoy, although encouraging a strategy of productive engagement, accepts much of it. In this response I show that my critics fail to demonstrate that Bourdieu's sociology is explanatory. However, I agree with them that reflexivity is central for the French sociologist's popularity. The main difference between us is that for me reflexivity is not a scientific methodology, but rather a central feature of Bourdieu's sociology as an ideology of sociologists.

SCIENCE AND POLITICS
A Response to Burawoy, Heilbron, & Steinmetz

DYLAN RILEY

As these two critical responses show, the most controversial claim of my essay was that the popularity of Bourdieu's social science is "a function of the generally prevailing social situation"[1] in academia, rather than a result of its explanatory power. Far from embodying a superior science, Bourdieusean theory, I argued, is an ideology of sociologists. My critics, especially Heilbron and Steinmetz, disagree. For them, a reflexive sociology that examines its own conditions of possibility provides both a better social science, and a more credible link to political action, than "antiquated Marxist schemas." Michael Burawoy, in contrast to Heilbron and Steinmetz, agrees with the central thrust of my analysis of Bourdieu's sociology, that it fares poorly on explanatory grounds and that its success cannot be reduced to its scientific power. In fact, he goes further than I do, suggesting that Bourdieu's sociology adumbrates a class project of the intelligentsia. However, he rejects my method of critique. On the one hand, I "reduce

1 Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936), 69.

Bourdieu's sociology to a poorly executed positivism," but at the same time I "reduce Bourdieu's politics to insulation in the academic field" (55). But how can one "simultaneously be a positivist and an engaged intellectual — the one requires autonomy from and the other embeddedness in the wider society" (55)?

As the following response makes clear, I remain unpersuaded by these critiques. *Pace* Heilbron and Steinmetz, I see little evidence that Bourdieu offers a superior scientific method for sociology. *Pace* Burawoy, I believe that Bourdieu's explanatory weaknesses are closely linked to his political ones. Indeed, how can there not be a tight link between explanatory power and political relevance?

What has become clear to me in the course of this discussion is that the central issue in the debate concerns whether or not the main problems of sociology are resolvable "sociologically" or whether, rather, they depend on overcoming the political isolation of the intelligentsia in advanced capitalism. That I have been able to state this issue more directly is largely due to my critics, and for this I owe them a sincere debt of gratitude.

First, a note on style is in order. It cannot have escaped the reader that, paradoxically, a Marxist (Burawoy) mounts a far more effective defense of the Bourdieusean position, than the self-appointed Bourdieuseans (Heilbron and Steinmetz). Indeed, Heilbron and Steinmetz's "critique" of my original piece is difficult to respond to, because it consists mainly in insults rather than arguments. Burawoy's, in contrast, is a serious assessment. The difference between these two reflects the theoretical positions from which the authors write. One of the distinctive features of Bourdieu's sociology is its disregard for serious critical dialogue with alternative theoretical traditions.[2] In this sense, Heilbron and Steinmetz's piece is an excellent example of Bourdieusean

2 One of the best examples of this is the section in *Pascalian Meditations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 61–65, titled "Digression: A critique of my critics," in which Bourdieu manages to preemptively dismiss all criticism of his work as scholasticism without mentioning any specific critics or their critiques.

critique. In contrast to Bourdieu and those who follow him, the critical reconstruction of an intellectual adversary's point of view has always been a central element in the Marxian tradition from which Burawoy writes. This is to a large extent because Marxism takes ideas far more seriously than Bourdieusean sociology does.

Burawoy, however, accuses my initial critique of being Bourdieusean in that "Riley does to Bourdieu what Bourdieu does to those he seeks to belittle" (54). It is true that there is a little of the thought that "what is good for the (Marxian) goose is good for the (Bourdieusean) gander" in my piece. However, unlike the typical Bourdieusean procedure, I attempted to make sense of Bourdieu's central theoretical claims and evaluate the quality of the evidence brought in their support. This procedure is very un-Bourdieusean. There are no examples anywhere in Bourdieu's work of a reconstruction of an alternative explanation or theory combined with a serious discussion of the evidence. In particular, Bourdieu has never bothered to show that Marxism is wrong about any particular explanation. I therefore reject the claim that I am trying to do to Bourdieu what he does to others. My model of critique is instead Perry Anderson's *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*.[3] Just as Anderson considered, and then rejected, the hypothesis that the rise of structuralism and then post-structuralism in France was due to its intellectual superiority to French Marxism, so I considered and then rejected the hypothesis that Bourdieu's contemporary preeminence is due to his sociology's explanatory power. I did not initially evaluate Bourdieu's theory as an expression of his position in the field of sociology; I rather considered his sociology as an attempt to grapple with social reality.

More specifically, my article evaluated Bourdieu's work across three dimensions: his class theory, his theory of social reproduction, and his theory of social change. Both Heilbron and Steinmetz, and Burawoy raise doubts about my specific claims in these areas, and point to a further

3 Anderson, (London: Verso, 1983), 33.

issue which they think I unjustly neglected, or failed to understand: reflexivity. Accordingly, I will organize my response in terms of these four headings. I also include an appendix entitled "Scholarship" since Heilbron and Steinmetz's critique is largely concerned with demeaning me on this front. The order of exposition is therefore as follows:

I. Class Theory
II. Social Reproduction
III. Social Change
IV. Reflexivity
V. Appendix on Scholarship

CLASS THEORY

My article drew primarily on *Distinction* to show that Bourdieu's class theory is not explanatory. I raised three main problems. First, I argued that Bourdieu "fails to specify … an empirically tractable meaning of the term 'class.'" Instead, Bourdieu either inflates the concept to such an extent that it becomes equivalent to any social difference, so that no pattern of survey responses could fail to show "class differences in taste"; or he includes habitus in his definition of class, thereby rendering any attempt to demonstrate a relationship between class position and disposition (i.e., habitus) meaningless. This latter problem is especially severe in the case of cultural capital, which according to Bourdieu can assume an "embodied" form and therefore *is* a type of habitus.

Second, I argued that whatever one thinks about class, Bourdieu's empirical evidence does not demonstrate the existence of habitus, whether class-determined or otherwise. Bourdieu's evidence shows some "class" differences in some domains of taste. But he does not show similar differences across different domains of taste, which is the crucial point for habitus.

Finally, I argued that Bourdieu implicitly employed two models of the relationship between class and taste in *Distinction*; one in which each class has its own habitus, and a second in which habitus is shared across classes. But these theories are not only different; they directly contradict one another.[4]

How do my critics respond to these claims? Heilbron and Steinmetz's article does not address the first and third points and provides a weak response to point two, contradicted by a contribution to a book that they themselves reference. Burawoy also neglects to address the first point but does provide a substantial and thoughtful response to points two and three. Before responding to each critique in detail it is worth pausing over what my critics admit (in Heilbron and Steinmetz's case implicitly, in Burawoy's explicitly): that Bourdieu's theory of class and taste is, as Burawoy puts it "tautological" and not "accessible to empirical examination" (57). To me this seems like a substantial surrender at the very outset. Let me now turn to a more detailed examination of the responses.

Heilbron and Steinmetz

Most of Heilbron and Steinmetz's response to my critique in this section castigates me for failing to see the obvious truth of Bourdieu's claims. The authors argue that I counterpose a "nostalgic" and "economistic" conception of class to Bourdieu's, which latter recognizes "cultural and social capital as relatively independent and important sources of power and inequality" (40). In their view "the choice is whether we retreat to some form of economistic class theory or move forward toward more refined forms of class analysis and domination." However, my article did not purport to offer an alternative to Bourdieu's class theory, but

4 These points are not particularly controversial even among scholars who are generally sympathetic to Bourdieu. See for example Michèle Lamont and Annette Lareau, "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments," *Sociological Theory* 6 (1987): 153–168.

rather assessed his theory on its own terms. As I suggested, Heilbron and Steinmetz largely ignore that assessment, and simply assume that Bourdieu has demonstrated superiority of his account, and its claim that "cultural and social capital" are "relatively independent and important sources of power and inequality." Unfortunately, *Distinction* doesn't demonstrate that at all because Bourdieu's book nowhere specifies how his argument succeeds where the received "nostalgic" and "economistic" ones do not. Despite this, Heilbron and Steinmetz criticize me for not accepting its superiority.

Perhaps to bolster their case about the explanatory power of *Distinction*, Heilbron and Steinmetz also draw attention to the fact that I failed to appreciate the massive critical and applied literature that has grown out of *Distinction*. This suggests that there is a large, well-known body of secondary literature that definitively addresses my concerns. However, the volume that Heilbron and Steinmetz reference as "a state-of-the-art collection" — *The Routledge Companion to Bourdieu's Distinction* — neither effectively addresses the problems with Bourdieu's *Distinction* nor adduces a research program to be developed.

Consider first the attempt to address how Bourdieu demonstrates in *Distinction* a connection between class position and taste. The key issue here is how to interpret the enigmatic figure in *Distinction* entitled the "space of social positions" and the "space of lifestyles." Monique de Saint Martin, one of Bourdieu's key research collaborators, addresses this problem in her article "From 'Anatomie du goût' to *La Distinction*." De Saint Martin's description of this gnomic image's construction is worth reproducing in full:

> Thus the figures published in the social positions space and the space of lifestyles are not the outcome of plane diagrams of correspondence analysis. They have been worked out on the basis of a series of manual graphs which in the last stages owed a lot to the principles of correspondence analysis and to a few of the correspondence analyses carried out on the basis of the data from the survey on taste and the INSEE

> surveys. During the preparation of "Anatomie du gout," we sketched out, drew and re-drew numerous graphs, schemas, diagrams and histograms. We would have to be able to find them again and study them to understand how the social positions space and the lifestyles space were constructed gradually by trial and error.[5]

Given the centrality of this figure to Bourdieu's arguments, it is remarkable that de Saint Martin seems unable to offer a more lucid description of how exactly it was made. Indeed, she calls for further research into the matter.[6] Her puzzlement is not isolated. At the beginning of what is an otherwise spirited defense of Bourdieu, Lennart Rosenlund writes:

> What are the procedures Bourdieu followed in constructing this model [the space of social positions and space of lifestyles figure]? *Distinction* is not a research report [!], and one looks in vain for detailed accounts of his deliberations and strategic choices.[7]

Given that the central point of *Distinction* is to demonstrate a relationship between tastes or "lifestyles" and "positions in social space" it is striking how difficult it is for Bourdieu's admirers and even research collaborators to explain how the book uses its evidence to show such a connection. If one were to ask, "how is it that Bourdieu in *Distinction* was able to conclude that certain forms of cultural consumption could be connected to certain 'positions' in social space?" the honest answer seems to be, "Who knows?" Accordingly, anyone remotely skeptical of Bourdieu's empirical claims in *Distinction* is unlikely to be reassured by the *Companion*.

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5 Monique de Saint Martin, "From Anatomie du goût' to *La Distinction*" in ed. Philippe Coulangeon and Julien Duval, *The Routledge Companion to Bourdieu's Distinction* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 15–28, 18.

6 "From Anatomie du goût' to *La Distinction*," 16.

7 Lennart Rosenlund, "Working with Distinction: Scandinavian Experiences" in eds. Philippe Coulangeon and Julien Duval, *The Routledge Companion to Bourdieu's Distinction* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 157–186, 159.

The *Companion* also directly undermines a point that Heilbron and Steinmetz make in one of their rare engagements with my actual writing. They state, in an argument that can be best described as *reductio ad positivism*, that my claim that habitus should be demonstrable with evidence is an "empiricist objection" which fails to appreciate "ontological depth relativism." Bernard Lahire's contribution to the *Companion* flatly contradicts this idea. He states that the concept of habitus *does* have a clear implication. Dispositions should be transferable across "different domains of practice which have no apparent relation." This is exactly the interpretation that I proposed, and as I showed, this implication is not well supported in *Distinction*, and none of the analyses in the *Companion* take up the challenge of marshaling evidence for it. Indeed, Lahire extends my initial point, stating, "the idea of a transferability of tastes or attitudes from one domain of practice to the other, is contradicted by a number of survey data-sets."[8] In most of the other contributions, with the exception of a very interesting article on bodies,[9] the concept of habitus plays little role.

To conclude, Heilbron and Steinmetz neither effectively respond themselves to my main critiques, nor do they refer to a body of literature which does respond to them. They fail to even acknowledge two of my central points (1 and 3) and deal with point 2 in a strikingly inept way. Consequently, I see no reason to revise my position in light of their remarks.

8 Bernard Lahire, "Culture at the Level of the Individual: Challenging Transferability" in eds. Philipe Coulangeon and Julien Duval, *The Routledge Companion to Bourdieu's Distinction* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 109–118, 114. For a broader critique by the same author see "From the habitus to an individual heritage of dispositions. Towards a sociology at the level of the individual," *Poetics* 31 (2003): 329–355, especially 333–336.

9 Dieter Vanderbroeck, "Classifying Bodies, Classified Bodies, Class Bodies: A Carnal Critique of the Judgment of Taste" in eds. Philipe Coulangeon and Julien Duval, *The Routledge Companion to Bourdieu's Distinction* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 227–254.

Burawoy

Michael Burawoy's defense of Bourdieu's theory of class and taste is of a much higher quality than Heilbron and Steinmetz's. He suggests that my critique derives from a misunderstanding of *Distinction*:

> [The book focuses on the way] the practices of consumption are organized according to their own internal hierarchical logic that obscures the homologous hierarchy of class. Habitus, therefore, has a class character but it also transcends class — the class dimension is deeper and preconscious, the product of inculcation; whereas the shared dimension of habitus is more conscious and practical, organizing patterns of consumption in a relatively autonomous social space. By focusing on the food one eats, the liquor one drinks, the paintings one appreciates, the films one watches, and by recognizing their implicit organization into hierarchies of legitimacy, Bourdieu contends, one overlooks the class hierarchies that they simultaneously hide and express. This is symbolic domination at work — a domination that is hidden, that is not recognized as such, that is, in short, misrecognized (58).

Per Burawoy, there are two logics at work in *Distinction*: a logic of consumption and a logic of class. Although they are "homologous" to each other, the former is relatively autonomous from the latter, and it is precisely this relative autonomy that masks class. In this sense, consumption produces the misrecognition of class as taste.

This is a very able interpretation of *Distinction*. But it does not relieve Bourdieu of the need to establish "the relationship between objective conditions of existence and … lifestyles, that is patterns of practices and preferences in cultural, moral and political matters in the broad sense" as Rosenlund summarizes Bourdieu's project.[10] Burawoy's claim that Bourdieu's notion is "parallel to Marx's commodity fetishism" suggests

10 "Working With Distinction: Scandinavian Experiences," 158.

as much. For although Marx did think that capitalist commodity production produced commodity fetishism, he certainly did not define capitalist relations of production *as* commodity fetishism in the way that Bourdieu sometimes defines classes as *habitus*. One problem in figuring out exactly what Bourdieu (and in this case also Burawoy) is trying to say is the ambiguous causal language he deploys. What exactly does it mean to say that a particular logic of consumption is *homologous* to the "logic of class"? There is no answer to this question in Bourdieu's work.

The bulk of Burawoy's response to my critique of *Distinction*, in any case, focuses on my second and third points: the claim that *Distinction* offers little evidence of the existence of a habitus of any sort, and the claim that it develops an internally contradictory theory in which habitus is both class determined and shared across classes. Burawoy seeks to answer both of these claims with an ingenious reinterpretation of habitus.

I suspect that Burawoy deems it unreasonable to demand that the concept of habitus have direct empirical implications in the way that I suggest in "Bourdieu's Class Theory." To understand Burawoy's point, it is necessary to introduce Imre Lakatos's philosophy of science, an approach to scientific explanation that Burawoy almost single-handedly brought to sociology.[11] Lakatos suggested the concept of a research program made up of a hard core of theoretical postulates, and then a set of empirical anomalies or falsifications that oriented the direction of future work to reconciling these anomalies. I suspect that in Burawoy's understanding, the *habitus* is part of Bourdieu's Lakatosian hard core. Bourdieuseans have made a *methodological* decision to reject falsifications of it. From a Lakatosian perspective, this would be reasonable. Although born in an ocean of anomalies, habitus could be understood as driving subsequent research forward to defeat the falsifications. The research

11 Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes" in eds. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 91–195, 132–138. For Burawoy's adaptation see "Marxism as Science: Historical Challenges and Theoretical Growth," *American Sociological Review* 55, no. 6 (1990): 775–793.

program, if it were a progressive and not a degenerating one, would then grow by re-specifying the concept of habitus to account for the anomalous evidence and make at least some new verifiable predictions.

I think there is a kernel of truth to Burawoy's intuition as an account of what Bourdieusean research is attempting to do; but as a research *program*, Bourdieusean sociology does not display many features of a progressive problem-shift.[12] Although the concept of habitus is certainly swimming in anomalies,[13] even in *Distinction* itself, the Bourdieusean research program fails to reformulate its theory to account for them and generate new predictions. Instead, Bourdieuseans solve empirical problems by making their theoretical structure more complex, and more difficult to bring into relation with empirical materials. Indeed, in my view, Burawoy's own reconstruction of the concept of habitus is a textbook example of such a procedure.

Let us begin with the problem Burawoy's reconstruction is designed to address. I argued in my initial article that the notion of class habitus contradicts the notion of "symbolic domination." For, as I pointed out, in order to be symbolically dominated the lower classes must share the *same* schemas of perception and appreciation as the upper classes; but class habitus implies that different social classes have different habitus, and therefore different schemas of perception and appreciation. To address this problem, Burawoy says that habitus has two levels; there is a "deep" class habitus, and then a more "conscious and practical" habitus, shared across classes.[14] This explains why the relationship between class and taste is "homologous." Although consumption patterns are organized according to the "logic of class," particular

12 Jeffrey J. Sallaz and Jane Zavisca, "Bourdieu in American Sociology, 1980–2004," *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (2007): 21–41 claim to show (27–28) that Bourdieu's sociology constitutes a Lakatosian progressive problem-shift. But they do not explain what Bourdieu's hard core is, nor do they adequately specify the anomalies that the program faces.

13 "Culture at the Level of the Individual," 116.

14 Burawoy's inspiration for this reading is Stephen Vaisey's interesting paper "Motivation and Justification: A Dual Process Model of Culture in Action," *American Journal of Sociology* 114, no. 6 (2009): 1675–1715, 1682–1683.

patterns of consumption are not causally or expressively linked to particular class positions. Instead, there is a rather loose "statistical" relationship between class and taste because the habitus contains two conflicting parts.

This attempt at reconstruction strikes me as degenerative, rather than progressive; when faced with instances of shared tastes across classes Bourdieuseans might invoke the "shared habitus," and when faced with evidence of class differences in taste they might invoke the "deep" class habitus. What novel predictions are generated by this reconstruction? I can see none. How is Burawoy's two-level structure different from saying that "in some cases tastes appear to be related to class, and in others not, for reasons that we do not fully understand"? So, Burawoy's reconstruction renders the already ineffable concept of habitus more complex, while at the same time reducing its empirical implications.

There are other attempts to reformulate habitus to account for anomalies. Do they represent a progressive problem-shift? One of the most revealing debates concerns cultural omnivores. Sociologists of taste have found that privileged persons seem capable of crossing "established ritual boundaries between the fine, popular and folk arts."[15] This finding falsifies "the simple homology thesis":[16] the thesis that different classes should express different taste patterns. The Bourdieusean cultural sociologist Omar Lizardo attempts to overturn this falsification by reconstructing Bourdieu's theory as an account of the "aesthetic disposition." Lizardo argues that class habitus refers to a mode of consuming culture rather than to a specific set of cultural objects. Upper classes, and particularly those with high levels of cultural capital, are endowed with an aesthetic disposition. This allows them to consume many different types of objects (highbrow and lowbrow) in

15 Richard A. Peterson developed this thesis in "Understanding audience segmentation: From elite and mass to omnivore and univore," *Poetics* 21 (1992): 243–258. The quote above is from Omar Lizardo, "The Question of Culture: Consumption and Stratification Revisited," *Sociologica* 2 (2008): 1–32, 3.

16 "The Question of Culture," 3.

an aestheticized way. In a subsequent study, So Lizardo's Lakatosian Lizardo and Skiles claim that there is substantial evidence for this view. The aesthetic disposition explains why arts consumption transcends genres or styles; it explains why omnivorous tastes are associated with high-status occupations, and why people who like fine arts also seem to be tolerant of other forms of art.[17]

However, none of this evidence shows that an aesthetic disposition lies behind these patterns of cultural consumption. There are at least two alternative hypotheses. The first is that more highly educated people know more about what cultural products are available, and the second is that they have more time and resources available to take advantage of whatever is culturally on offer. In short, omnivorousness might be a result of conditions of knowledge and resources rather than a deeply rooted aesthetic disposition acquired in early childhood. Furthermore, Lizardo's reconstruction of Bourdieu's theory fails to address the problem of transposition. Although he and Skiles claim that the aesthetic disposition is transposable, they do not explain Lahire's findings that there is little coherent pattern of tastes across different domains. So, Lizardo's Lakatosian reconstruction fails to overcome the well-established falsifications of Bourdieu's theory. Does it make any novel predictions? Lizardo himself does not. He claims only that his interpretation is "consistent" with the evidence. But so are the other two interpretations that I suggested here.

Lizardo thus fails in his attempt to create a progressive problem-shift. Although the details are different, like Burawoy's reconstruction it insulates habitus from having strong empirical implications, while failing either to successfully account for the anomalies that the research program faces or make new predictions.

Thus far I have discussed Bourdieu's research program of class and culture in isolation from any well-articulated theoretical alternatives apart from the two rather underdeveloped theories of education and

17 Omar Lizardo and Sara Skiles, "Reconceptualizing and Theorizing 'Omnivorousness': Genetic and Relational Mechanisms," *Sociological Theory* 30 (2012): 263–282, 270.

resources hinted at above. But as Lakatos put the point, "history of science suggests that … tests are–at least–three-cornered fights between rival theories and experiment."[18] What rival theories of class and culture under capitalism are available?

One such theory is Gramsci's. He argued that the bourgeois class rules through a distinctively *classless* ideological system. As Gramsci put the point in contrasting the rule of the bourgeoisie to pre-capitalist classes:

> The previous ruling classes were essentially conservative in the sense that they did not tend to construct an organic passage from the other classes into their own, i.e. to enlarge their class sphere "technically" and ideologically: their conception was that of a closed caste. The bourgeois class poses itself as an organism in continuous movement, capable of absorbing the entire society, assimilating it to its own cultural and economic level. The entire function of the State has been transformed; the State has become an "educator," etc.[19]

For Gramsci, then, the bourgeoisie was a potentially hegemonic class in that it did not create sharp cultural distinctions between itself and the direct producers but rather sought to incorporate direct producers into its own culture. Similar views can be found in the literature on nationalism, which in this sense is also implicitly Gramscian. Thus Gellner[20] and Anderson argue that nationalism is a distinctive cultural phenomenon, which broke down the barriers between high and low culture through print capitalism or the education system. Anderson's formulation is particularly clear. He suggests that the logic of capitalist development, particularly "print capitalism" centered on publishing,

18 Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes", 115

19 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, eds. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International, 1971), 260.

20 Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism," *Theory and Society* 10, no. 6 (1981): 753–776, especially p. 762 where Gellner writes, "Modern society has an inherent tendency toward a fair measure of equality in style of life."

was a powerful homogenizing force as "print capitalists" searched for markets among "the monoglot masses."[21]

This model of the relationship between culture and class under capitalism opposes the Bourdieusean one. From its perspective, the Bourdieusean research program is mistaken because it applies a conceptual apparatus appropriate to pre-capitalist social formations, namely the idea of a society of estate-type groups, to advanced capitalist societies. The two positions can be contrasted in terms of three questions: what each finds worth explaining about culture and class in capitalism, what evidence each regards as anomalous, and what each regards as the direction of future research.

The central question for the Bourdieusean sociology of culture is, "What explains the *tight link* between tastes and class in advanced capitalism?" It proposes the theory of habitus to account for the link. Bourdieuseans regard survey evidence on the non-transferability of habitus, and a weak link between class and taste, as anomalous. Bourdieusean research reconstructs the concept of habitus to account for these anomalies: so far with limited success.

The central question of the Gramscian model is, "What explains the *loose link* between class and taste in advanced capitalism?" It proposes the theory of hegemony to account for this weakness. The same evidence that Bourdieuseans see as anomalous confirms the Gramscian theory. It regards the limited evidence that confirms the Bourdieusean theory as anomalous. It accounts for these anomalies by pointing to the pre-capitalist "caste-like" characteristics of those societies that conform to some extent the Bourdieusean theory, especially France. It also makes the further prediction that the concept of habitus is most likely to be useful in precisely those contexts where estate-type group formations emerge under capitalism: namely in explaining national differences and ethnic differences, but not class differences.

Considered as research programs, the superiority of the Gramscian

21 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991), 38.

alternative is obvious. It accounts for all of the anomalous evidence that the Bourdieuseans are struggling with, and it makes further predictions about exactly where the Bourdieusean theory is likely to be correct. Most importantly, its research program is not oriented exclusively toward a reconstruction of its central theoretical concept, hegemony, but rather toward explaining the world.

I conclude, then, that considered from the perspective of a "post-positivist" philosophy of science, Bourdieu's research program on class and culture fares no better than considered more narrowly in terms of whether it can account for its own evidence. In Lakatosian terms, it is a degenerating problem-shift. Of course, no one should underestimate human ingenuity. It is possible that a clever person will figure out how to study habitus and reanimate the research program. But a precondition of any such revival would be recognition of how much trouble the enterprise is in. That would require, however, a serious consideration of alternative explanations for the patterns of relevant evidence: not a *forte* of Bourdieusean sociology.

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

The second main claim of my article was that Bourdieu lacks a convincing explanation of social reproduction. His account rests on the claim that people universally and systematically misrecognize social inequalities as inequalities of taste, culture, or talent: a process Bourdieu terms symbolic domination. There are two institutions that produce symbolic domination: fields, through the process of *illusio*, and the school system, through the process of inculcation. I made two main points about this theory of reproduction. First, I argued that Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction depends on an image of society as constituted predominantly of fields. But Bourdieuseans offer no arguments, nor much evidence, for this particular image. Instead they engage in "field reductionism" by describing all social relations as agonistic games made up of individual actors competing for socially defined stakes. I

doubt the general applicability of this metaphor, and consequently, the theory of social reproduction that follows from it. Second, I argued that Bourdieu's theory about the school system fails comparatively; there is no reason to believe that class societies possessing well-articulated and autonomous school systems enjoy greater legitimacy and stability, than those that do not. How do my critics respond to these claims?

Heilbron and Steinmetz

Following their usual procedure, Heilbron and Steinmetz mostly ignore my arguments. However, their remarks on practice relate to social reproduction, and can be usefully discussed here. Heilbron and Steinmetz accuse me of neglecting the "concept of practice" which they call "a curious and symptomatic omission."[22] Practices, they say, are "social processes that are neither entirely systematic nor completely random" (38), and this idea is crucial in order to avoid the confusion of the "practice of logic" with the "logic of practice."

Pace Heilbron and Steinmetz, I addressed the notion of practice on page 132 of my essay, although in retrospect I should have made more of it. In my view, Bourdieu provides a general account of how people comport themselves (I employ this term to avoid the dangers of "behaviorism"). For him, most human comportment results from preconscious routines. This, I take it, is what he means by practice; and this seems to be what Heilbron and Steinmetz think as well. As I stated in my article, this conception of practice is based "on the notion of a radical cleft between social theory and lay knowledge." Practice for Bourdieu is always tacit, preconscious, and mired in misrecognition. Lay actors are never, for Bourdieu, capable of objectifying themselves and their circumstances such that they might gain an adequate insight into their social conditions and comport themselves accordingly. Presumably

22 It is true that, in accordance with much of the secondary literature on Bourdieu, I identified the four central notions of Bourdieu's sociology as being habitus, field, capital, and symbolic power. "Bourdieu in American Sociology, 1980–2004," 23.

this is a theory of social reproduction since it suggests that "agents" reproduce themselves by acting according to preconscious routines.

This strikes me as one of the strangest, and least plausible, aspects of Bourdieu's sociology, and Heilbron and Steinmetz offer no defense of it; they simply *assert* its validity. A more reasonable view would be to claim that while some elements of human comportment in some times and places might be tacit and routinized in the way Bourdieu suggests, explaining the circumstances in which subordination to tacit routine either prevails, or does not, should be a major aim of sociological theory. Yet, far from offering any suggestions in this regard, Bourdieu simply reduces all human behavior to "practice" as tacit routine.

Bourdieu's idea of practice as subordination to routine is particularly striking given that far more sophisticated models of human comportment are widely available, particularly in the neo-Marxian tradition growing out Lukács, Gramsci, and Sartre. This tradition, with its notion of "praxis" rather than "practice," is centrally concerned with the issue of under what historical circumstances, and in what social groups, insight into the workings of society is likely to develop. Accordingly, what remains a theoretical dogma with Bourdieu, the split between the "logic of practice" and the "logic of theory," constitutes an empirical and political problem for Marxism.

Burawoy

Burawoy, to turn to the second response, suggests that Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction centered on symbolic domination and misrecognition is his strong point. Indeed, for him, the notion of "symbolic domination" is the lynchpin of all Bourdieu's work and poses a serious challenge to Marxism (58).

What does symbolic domination mean and what advantages does it offer? Burawoy contrasts symbolic domination to the Marxist concept of ideology as "false consciousness." While ideology is pitched at the level

of explicit (false) representations of the world, symbolic domination is a form of immediate preconscious disposition. Such preconscious dispositions can arise in two ways: either through internalization and socialization, primarily in the school system, or in fields, through engagement in social relations (63).

I am not persuaded by this characterization of the relationship between Marx (and Marxism more broadly) and Bourdieu, which seems to me to be too Bourdieusean. I would propose a different contrast axed on two dimensions: their respective evaluations of common sense, and their sociology of ideas.

One point of confusion is important to resolve from the outset. Marxism has never neglected the existence of a preconscious or tacit level of awareness, which we could usefully call, following Gramsci, "common sense." The difference is that Marxism, unlike Bourdieusean sociology, is centrally concerned with the connection between the preconscious and conscious dimensions of ideology, and therefore rejects the reduction of ideology to the single dimension of pre-consciousness. In sum Marx's theory of ideology refers only to "consciousness" is a canard.[23]

23 To fully demonstrate this would require a longer discussion of ideology, but a couple of remarks may suffice here. Consider two analyses of ideology from opposite traditions within Western Marxism: Althusser's and Lukács's. Althusser insists that ideology is a matter of "acts and practices that are regulated by rituals" in *Sur la reproduction* (Paris: Presses Universitaires Francais, 1995), 222; Just like Bourdieu with his notion of symbolic power, Althusser (ibid, 221) invokes Blaise Pascal for his concept of ideology, writing, "We owe then to the defensive dialectic of Pascal the marvelous formula that permits us to reverse the conceptual schema of the ideology of ideology. Pascal says more or less: 'kneel down, move your lips with the prayer, and you will believe.'" Julien Pallotta establishes the close connection between Althusser's concept of ideology and Bourdieu's notion of symbolic domination in "Bourdieu Face au Marxisme Althussérien: La Question de l'État," *Actuel Marx* 2, no. 58 (2015): 130–143. Consider, second, Lukács's notion of ideology as *reification*, which extends Marx's original concept of commodity fetishism. For Lukács, reification is not false consciousness because it is not consciousness; it is rather the way that social reality appears "immediately" to all agents in a capitalist society. It is, as he puts the point on p. 52 of *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge: MIT, 1971) a form of "class conditioned *unconsciousness* of one's own socio-historical and economic condition." One of the central meanings of ideology as reification in the Hegelian Marxist tradition is therefore an implicit and immediate sense of the way the social world is, rather than false consciousness. In

However, the two traditions evaluate pre-consciousness in a very different way. Marx and his followers tend to have a positive understanding of common sense or tacit understandings. This level, for them, contains the seeds of "good sense" because in general people understand, even if only tacitly, how their surroundings work. One of Marxism's major political tasks is to excavate this good sense against the bad sense promoted by the mass media and other organizations outside the control of the working class. Bourdieu, in contrast, has a negative view of common sense. It is the basis of bad sense and misrecognition. Most people, most of the time, do not have an adequate grasp of their surroundings. The task of Bourdieusean science, accordingly, is to break with common sense. Burawoy's writings on Gramsci and Bourdieu bring out this difference with exemplary clarity, and it is a little surprising that he does not foreground them here.

There is a second dimension, however, which is equally important that Burawoy neglects. Very generally, Marx interprets ideas as efforts to come to terms with reality. Accordingly, to understand ideas one must carefully consider the relationship between realities and symbolic representations of them; this is the basic meaning of ideology. The contradictions and aporias embodied in ideology are, for Marx, reflections of real features of underlying social relations. This is why Marx spends so much energy developing a critique of the social thought of his time: the central one being the critique of political economy. Marx ferrets out actual features of the social world, which in turn generate the ideas he is examining. One of the clearest examples of this procedure is Marx's observation that, for political economy, the exchangeability of use values appears to inhere in their character as physical objects.[24] This leads Marx to a decisively important question: what must a society be like such that use values appear to be exchangeable because of their physical characteristics,

sum, ideology as an immediate unreflective insertion into the world is a commonplace for a wide variety of Marxist traditions, not a challenge to them.

24 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Vintage, 1977), 164.

rather than because of the interdependence of qualitatively different forms of labor? Thus, the critical examination of ideas, understood as attempts to come to terms with social reality, is an important method of posing questions from Marx's perspective.

Bourdieu's sociology of ideas differs; this is partly because of his reduction of ideology to the preconscious symbolic level, and partly because he neglects the relationship between ideas and the realities to which they refer. As a consequence of this approach, he understands ideas exclusively as symbolic stances assumed by intellectuals in a field of cultural production. Therefore, the structure of ideas for Bourdieu is determined primarily by their relationship to other ideas, rather than by any constraints imposed on them by social reality. Far from being an advance on Marxist theories of ideology, this approach significantly narrows and weakens the scope of investigation; most damagingly, it excludes any significant sociology of sociological knowledge. For all its famed reflexivity, Bourdieu's sociology says strikingly little about the historical development of social thought, as opposed to philosophy and literature;[25] this is a consequence of the Bourdieusean notion of symbolic domination, which is best suited to fields that lack an empirical basis.[26]

25 See for example Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) and *The Rules of Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

26 Strikingly, Steinmetz's own work on positivism confirms this weakness. For in this work, he rejects the Bourdieusean approach as an account of positivism because of its "portmanteau and ad hoc quality." See George Steinmetz, "Sociology: Scientific Authority and the Transition to Post-Fordism: The Plausibility of Positivism in U.S. Sociology since 1945" in ed. George Steinmetz, *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 275–323, 289–290.

FIGURE 1.

	COMMON SENSE	IDEAS
MARX'S IDEOLOGY	Good Sense	Refer to the World
BOURDIEU'S SYMBOLIC DOMINATION	Bad Sense	Refer to Other Ideas

Bourdieu's reduction of ideology to symbolic domination also affects his relationship to alternative currents of social thought. Burawoy, of course, is highly aware of Bourdieu's tendency to pilfer concepts and arguments without acknowledgment and with little respect for the integrity of the bodies of work of which they are a part. Indeed, in his brilliant *Conversations with Bourdieu*[27] he has done more than anyone to document instances of this procedure and reconstruct the underlying debates. But he doesn't see the close connection between Bourdieu's sloppy treatment of other people's work and the idea of symbolic domination. For Bourdieu, since ideas are simply opposed symbolic positions in a field of struggle, to examine their internal structure or to evaluate the nature of their claims about the world is a "scholastic" waste of time.

The concept of "symbolic domination," in sum, is less of a challenge to Marxism than a significant retreat from the Marxist theory of ideology. It reduces ideas to symbolic oppositions rather than investigating either the connection between tacit understandings and explicit theories, or the link between ideas and reality. It remains quite puzzling to me why Burawoy would want to jettison this complex field of problems in favor of the dubious and unidimensional notion of "symbolic domination."

27 Michael Burawoy and Karl Van Holdt, *Conversations with Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Moment* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012).

Having discussed Burawoy's general view of symbolic domination, I can now turn to his account of Bourdieu's theory of reproduction, because this is largely a matter of how symbolic domination is produced. Burawoy begins by usefully distinguishing between two claims in Bourdieu's work: first that misrecognition is produced through a process of internalization, and second that it is a consequence of engagement in social games (81). Burawoy largely rejects the first account, which may be the reason that he neglects my arguments about the role of schooling in reproduction. However, he fully endorses Bourdieu's second theory, and rejects my claim that the metaphor of fields is of limited use. Burawoy also suggests that my discussion of the importance of democracy for the reproduction of capitalism is compatible with Bourdieu's notion of fields. I would make three points in response: a general point about Bourdieu's social ontology, a specific point about Bourdieu's theory of *illusio*, and a historical point about Bourdieu's account of the reproduction of capitalism.

Concerning the first point, I cannot believe that Burawoy really disagrees with me, for I never claimed that the metaphor of social games or fields is *generally* inappropriate. In fact, as I stated in my article this would be to "reverse Bourdieu's own dogmatism." My point was that Bourdieu tends to describe all activities in "modern society" as organized in fields. I invoked the example of production for a specific reason. Although Burawoy has shown that social games are crucial to organizing consent to the extraction of surplus value, I cannot believe that he would reduce the labor process to a game. For, although labor might be organized under capitalism as a game, clearly it is also centrally about the production of use values. And it is precisely this dimension of labor that gives it a historical, rather than reproductive, character. To make the point as sharply as possible, every subsequent game of monopoly always starts in exactly the same place as the previous one. But every subsequent game of production under capitalism always starts with labor and capital in a different position from the previous one because capital tends to accumulate, while wages do not. Capitalism

has for this reason a historical character that derives not from its being a game, but from its being a process of production.

What about education? Is this well described as a game? Certainly, there are game-like elements to the organization of education in "the capitalist university" as Burawoy puts it. But the pedagogical process itself is not a game: it is instead a process of transformation much like production. It imparts new habits, information, and skills that, while not being forms of "capital" since they do not depend on a prior process of expropriation, are real. In short, my general point is that the reduction of sociology to the study of fields occludes a whole range of human activities, and particularly those activities that are most important for understanding history.

Second, Burawoy does not explain why social games produce *illusio* or misrecognition. In my initial paper I used the trivial example of basketball to ask why playing the game would require a suspension of the realization that it was an arbitrary historical construction. But the point becomes even more important with democracy. For although one could describe Przeworski's analysis of democracy as game-theoretic, there is nothing in Przeworski's theory that requires that participants in the game be subject to *illusio*. Elections make individuals' interests as citizens, rather than as members of a social class, the most relevant. But this doesn't require any misrecognition. In short, it remains unclear to me why Burawoy finds Bourdieu's second theory of misrecognition as rooted in games so compelling. What is it about games that produces misrecognition? There is little explanation of this either in Bourdieu, or in Burawoy.

There is, finally, a historical point about the reproduction of capitalism that Burawoy does not touch upon. It is pretty clear that the education system is key to the reproduction of capitalism for Bourdieu's account. However, that hypothesis doesn't hold up very well in comparative terms. There seems little connection between the strength and autonomy of the education system and the stability of capitalist relations of production. It is perhaps possible that the Bourdieusean

theory is about to experience a decisive test. For, if Burawoy is right and the university is transforming from a "university in capitalist society" to a "capitalist university," the necessary autonomy that universities possess in order to legitimate the dominant economic class may be under assault. Will this lead to a legitimation crisis? One can only hope, but there are good reasons to doubt that it would do so.

SOCIAL CHANGE

The final pillar of my assessment of Bourdieu focused on his theory of social change. I argued that Bourdieu's extensive use of the field metaphor deprives him of any notion of collective agency as a source of change. As a consequence, Bourdieu tries to explain change either as a result of individual-level strategies within a given context, or as the result of a macro-process of differentiation. How do my critics respond to this claim?

Heilbron and Steinmetz

Heilbron and Steinmetz point out that change is everywhere in Bourdieu's work, and, furthermore, that particular explanations of change (such as, for example, the May '68 uprising that I discussed in the initial article) can be found. I agree. The problem is not that there is no change in Bourdieu's sociology, it is rather that the explanations that Bourdieu offers for the changes he documents are weak. Furthermore, this weakness is connected to Bourdieu's theory of historical development. Heilbron and Steinmetz dismiss the demand for such a theory as an outmoded attempt to discern "general laws of history" and for good measure they accuse me of being a crypto-conservative American macrosociological Marxist with a penchant to go hunting for independent variables. Contemporary social science, presumably, can do without such notions, and surely would be better off without the whole tribe of benighted pseudo-intellectuals who peddle them.

Two responses suggest themselves here: one general, and one specific to Bourdieu. In the first place, social science can no more do without a general conception of historical development than it can do without ontology. Indeed, Weber's claim that there are no general laws of history is itself a theory of history — and is contradicted by his own theory of rationalization. The only choice we have is between an explicitly theorized image of history, and an implicit one.

Turning to the second point, Bourdieu, to his credit, relies on an explicit theory of historical development. The first leg of that theory is the notion of social differentiation, which, as I noted in the initial article, for Bourdieu is a "tendential general law." Presumably this law is producing constantly new fields. The second leg of Bourdieu's theory is the habitus, which is relatively resistant to transformed circumstances. Put together, these two legs of the theory explain why as social differentiation proceeds "agents" tend to experience various sorts of mismatch between their habitus and the field in which they act. This can manifest itself in a number of ways, as feelings of relative deprivation or what Durkheim would have called anomie. Now, what sort of explanations does this general theory of history allow Bourdieu to produce? In practice, Bourdieu's explanations come down to unexplained exogenous shocks disrupting stably reproductive fields; this is as true of *The Bachelors' Ball* as it is of the *Sociology of Algeria*.

Now, the crucial point is that it is never the dynamics *within the field* that explain whatever changes occur. Therefore, the fundamental causes of change in Bourdieu's accounts always remain external to his theory. The reason for this is connected to Bourdieu's attachment to the metaphor of the game, which is a metaphor of reproduction; thus, in contrast to Marx's dictum that "men make their own history but not in circumstances of their own choosing," Bourdieu's might be best put as "men reproduce themselves under existing circumstances until an exogenous shock knocks them out of their routine." Somehow it doesn't have quite the same ring.

Burawoy

I am not certain what Burawoy thinks about Bourdieu's theory of social change. He seems to agree with me that the hysteresis effect — the mismatch of habitus and field — remains both unexplained within the terms of his theory and unanalyzed in its highly various outcomes. But Burawoy also seems to glean a more endogenous theory of change in both *The Bachelors' Ball* and in *Homo Academicus* and *Distinction*. I find Burawoy's second case rather weak.

In *The Bachelors' Ball* peasant marriage strategies — trying to marry out the daughters, and marry in the sons to local girls — lead to a complete collapse of the marriage market. But why is this happening? The explanation is hardly endogenous to the field of peasant marriage strategies. Burawoy himself gives away the game when he writes, "Given the expanding access to education, consumption, and employment beyond peasant society … mothers try to maximize the family patrimony by marrying off their sons to local girls while encouraging their daughters to marry out" (65). But precisely this access is the properly causal element of the story: not the reproductive game of peasant marriage strategies. In the absence of an explanation of the expanding access, which cannot be taken as "given," this doesn't really count as an explanation at all.

Burawoy's second example of social change is even less compelling. In both *Homo Academicus* and *Distinction* Bourdieu, according to Burawoy, identifies an "insatiable demand for education lead[ing] to the expansion of higher education" which then leads to a devaluation of credentials and "a gap between expectations and achievement" (66). This, he states, is an *endogenous* source of social change. But the word "endogenous" is not clear, for what drives the insatiable demand for education remains unexplained. An *explanation* of, for example, May '68 on the lines along which Bourdieu develops it would seem to require in the first place an account of the insatiable demand for degrees. This is after all a rather historically specific phenomenon, not an intrinsic feature of human nature.

It is not clear to me what theory of social change is being explicated here, or how it relates to Bourdieu's sociological vision. In sum, I agree with Burawoy's conclusion that "Bourdieu does not have a fully worked out theory of social change nor a theory of history that *explains* social differentiation" (76). Instead, much like Durkheim, he posits social differentiation as a master process and then uses that to explain the hysteresis affect.

Given that Bourdieu's sociology displays the explanatory weaknesses I extensively documented, and to which neither Heilbron and Steinmetz, nor Burawoy, offer much in the way of a compelling response, it remains a puzzle why he has become the sociological theorist of the hour. The puzzle, as I suggested, deepens when one considers the breadth of Bourdieu's appeal: from mainstream sociology to radical critique. How should this be explained?

REFLEXIVITY

I now come to the most controversial claim in my article: that the popularity of Bourdieu's sociology follows from its resonance with the conditions of academic existence in the contemporary period. Bourdieu's sociology, I argued, is best understood as an ideological formation growing out of the separation of intellectuals from mass political movements, not a scientific theory. The key to Bourdieusean sociology as ideology, I suggested, is the notion of reflexivity: the idea that intellectuals must remain eternally vigilant about both the effect of categorization on the social world, and about the difference between categories of analysis and categories of practice. Both Heilbron and Steinmetz, and Burawoy, strongly disagree with my understanding of reflexivity. They suggest that Bourdieu's reflexive methodology leads to good science and good politics. How strong is their case? The discussion here can be usefully divided between my critics, as they take up different aspects of reflexivity. While Heilbron and Steinmetz focus on categorization and science, Burawoy focuses on the relations between categories of analysis and categories of practice.

Heilbron and Steinmetz

Heilbron and Steinmetz find the notion that reflexivity is an analogue to various middle-class lifestyle practices particularly annoying. They say that Bourdieu's particular version of the sociology of sociology is aimed at "improving scientific analysis" and "transcending the limits of disciplines and liberating research from its academic routines and geographical restrictions" (46). This is a common claim among Bourdieuseans. The problem is that Heilbron and Steinmetz, like other Bourdieuseans, offer no examples to show that reflexivity improves "scientific analysis." To get clarity on this issue requires consideration of actual examples of reflexivity in Bourdieu's work.

Consider first Bourdieu's recently much bruited theory of the state. In *Sur l'État* (*On the State*) Bourdieu begins his discussion with an extended critique of the concept of the state. Any discussion of the state, he suggests, is beset by an almost insurmountable methodological problem, because the categories through which one analyzes the state are categories of administrative practice invented by "agents" engaged in creating the thing they are describing. Thus, it is crucial to break with these received categories, the thought of the state, as a preliminary to analysis. This is an example of reflexivity because Bourdieu insists that the political sociologist reflect on the role of state theory itself in the constitution of its object.

What image of the state must one adopt in order to be convinced of the urgency of Bourdieu's methodological conundrum? In the first place, the state's main activity must be understood as defining social reality. This is why "agents" are universally afflicted with the "thought of the state." In the second place, the state should largely be understood as an outcome of categorization. Bourdieu develops *in extenso* both arguments. He first defines the state as the "central bank of symbolic capital"[28]: a location from which social reality as such is defined, and perhaps even

28 Initially Bourdieu's definition of the state appears to be a lightly warmed over Weberianism as when he writes that it is an organization claiming a monopoly of "legiti-

created. He then moves on to the view that the state is a creation of intellectuals, who by naming and defining the state, create it.[29]

Both of these claims are highly questionable. Modern states typically *do not* possess a monopoly on symbolic power, or even constitute a "central bank of symbolic capital." The media, parts of the education system, and the realm of political parties exist in civil society, not in the state,[30] and these institutions have at least as much influence on the constitution of reality as does the state. The second claim of course is an extreme version of the thesis that medieval jurists trained in Roman law were central to the creation of the modern state. Even the most ardent proponents of this notion however would be wary of claiming that the state was a creation of the jurists. In short, Bourdieu's method of reflexivity here doesn't lead to "improved scientific analysis"; instead it serves to disguise, under the appearance of methodological sophistication, an extravagant Hegelianism in which the idea of the state as developed by theoreticians of the state is the realization of the state.

Consider a second use of reflexivity, as instanced by Bourdieu's class analysis. A good example of this is the widely read "Social Space and the Genesis of Groups." Just as with his state theory, Bourdieu's class analysis is largely devoted to a discussion of struggles over the concept of class. In the case of class, these are classification struggles. Bourdieu makes three arguments about classification. First, class struggles entail struggles over classification; second, in this classification struggle, different "agents" have different socially determined capacities both to classify and to get their classifications to stick; third, "agents" who produce official state-sanctioned classifications have the greatest power

mate physical and symbolic violence." But what quickly becomes clear is that Bourdieu sees a monopoly on symbolic power or symbolic violence as far more important than other processes in the constitution of the state. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur l'État: Cours au Collège de France (1898-1992)* (Paris, Raisons d'agir, 2012), 14.

29 The best example is the statement, "The state is to a great extent a product of theoreticians," *Sur l'État*, 57.

30 For a demonstration of the social, rather than state, origins of official information see Rebecca Jean Emigh, Dylan Riley, and Patricia Ahmed, *Antecedents of Censuses from Medieval to Nation States: How Societies and States Count* (London: Springer 2016).

to impose their classifications. Again, this is an instance of reflexivity, because class analysis is shown to be a central part of class struggle, and thus the social scientist is given a central role in the theory.[31]

Despite this focus on classification, Bourdieu insists that "social differences" are not "pure theoretical artifacts." In fact, probable classes do exist in the absence of classification. This is Bourdieu's version of classes "in themselves." But what exactly are these classes that exist independently of classifications of them? Classes for Bourdieu are clusters of "agents" who share similar values on several "pertinent" variables, although which ones are pertinent is never explained. Bourdieu's method of reflexivity, his disquisition on classification, depends for its urgency on this highly questionable image of class as clusters of agents in a multidimensional social field. For it is precisely the indeterminacy and complexity of the "social field" that gives such considerable power to the "classifiers" and therefore requires attention to reflexivity. As Bourdieu puts the point, "The objects of the social world can be perceived and uttered in different ways … because they *always*[32] include a degree of indeterminacy and fuzziness."[33] If class structures were instead ontologically firmer, then the significance of classification struggles, and thereby the necessity for reflexivity, would be diminished. In short, Bourdieu's method of reflexivity derives from the ontology of fields; but if one doesn't agree with this particular image of social structure, the necessity for reflexivity becomes much less compelling.

Does this notion of class as a cluster of agents in a field constitute a scientific advance? It is hard to see how. Theoretically, it dissolves the idea of a class structure as a set of internally related yet objectively antagonistic positions into fuzzy and indeterminate sets of individuals with somewhat similar resource endowments, including crucially and tautologically, lifestyles that are also supposed to be explained by

31 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups," 734.

32 My emphasis.

33 "Social Space and the Genesis of Groups," 728.

class position (see above). Paradoxically, this is a commonsense view of class, one very close to mainstream economics. Furthermore, there are no specific implications that flow from this image. There are no expectations that some particular classes will struggle with others, or be available for alliances, or pursue collective or individual strategies that will have consequences for society as a whole.

To sum up, reflexivity, in the sense of a critique of categorization, depends for its urgency on a highly questionable substantive image of social relations. The reflexive procedure is compelling only in the case that social reality is both fuzzy and indeterminant, and that intellectuals play a decisive role in shaping this fuzzy indeterminacy by categorizing and analyzing it. This is the basis of Brubaker's claim that Bourdieu wants to "change the world, by changing the way … social scientists … see it."[34] To what group of "agents" would this view seem attractive? Obviously, to sociologists! What never gets asked, and indeed is positively prohibited by the insistent demand for reflexivity, is, "under what conditions, and with respect to what particular sociological objects, the activity of categorization can have, or not, an impact?" To pose such a question of course would require a theory in which at least some aspects of social reality are refractory to classification struggles, not changeable by intellectuals. In sum, reflexivity as practiced by Bourdieu does not *generally* produce good scientific analysis, as Heilbron and Steinmetz claim. What it does provide is a veneer of methodological respectability to a nebulous social ontology perfectly designed to give sociologists the leading role in whatever analysis one is to conduct.

Burawoy

Burawoy's interest in reflexivity differs from Heilbron and Steinmetz's. He is concerned with a reflexive awareness about the social position

34 Rogers Brubaker, "Social Theory as Habitus" in eds. Craigh Calhoun, Edward LiPuma and Moishe Postone, *Bourdieu Critical Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 212–234, 217.

from which knowledge is produced, rather than a reflexive awareness about the impact of categorization on social reality.

Burawoy argues that Bourdieu's formulation of this problem is unsurpassed, for his sociology recognizes knowledge's dependence on *skholé* — that is the leisure or interest in disinterestedness that comes from academic life — while simultaneously pointing out *skholé's* limitations through a recuperation of the truth of the participant located outside academia. Located in this double set of determinations, Bourdieusean sociologists respond to the pressures of the academic field, while engaging with the world of the participant. This shuttlecocking back and forth between the two points of view is supposed to guarantee a superior form of sociological practice.

It remains, however, unclear what consequences this oscillation of perspective has for the production of knowledge. One might expect Bourdieu to adumbrate a process of mutual transformation of both sociological theory and common sense. But in his work, the two truths of observer and participant remain abstractly opposed to one another in an unmediated opposition, even if both are given their due. There is no process of mutual transformation, no passage from common sense to good sense, no passage from practice to theory and from theory to practice.

Toward the end of his essay, Burawoy tries to go beyond Bourdieu. Like Bourdieu, he suggests sociology should both recognize, and critique, the scholastic position from which knowledge is produced. From this starting point, Burawoy seeks to establish a synthesis between the knowledge of the observer who looks at the world from the point of view of *skholé* and the knowledge of the engaged participant. He claims that the transformation of the university from the "university in capitalist society" to a "capitalist university" is breaking down the distinction between the two forms of knowledge. Thus, "Riley need only step outside his office to join those popular forces that inhabit classrooms, laboratories, libraries, sport stadiums, and canteens" (20). On this basis Burawoy seeks an alliance between Bourdieusean

sociologists with their emphasis on the autonomy of the scientific field, and Marxist sociologists who see truth as "the standpoint of the subaltern" (83). In sum, Burawoy, attempts to transcend Bourdieu by suggesting that the scientific field is collapsing under the incursions of the logic of capitalism, which is scrambling the context of methodological problems.

I am sympathetic to Burawoy's strategy of trying to resolve the antinomies of Bourdieu's theory by examining the concrete historical conditions that produce them. Indeed, that is the main thrust of the last section of my article. But in my view, Burawoy fails to break through the problem because he remains trapped in the methodology of reflexivity, which in this context leads to the misrecognition of political problems as methodological ones.

The work of Antonio Gramsci remains essential for a more concrete and historically specific formulation of this problem. Gramsci strove to identify a perspective, which he associated with the Modern Prince, i.e., the political party, that can be equated neither with the "participant" nor with the "observers"; this perspective was instead engaged but not populist, scientific but not contemplative. He explained it in the *Prison Notebooks* by asking what made Machiavelli's political science superior that of Guicciardini. Unlike the latter, who remained within the framework of the petty diplomacy of the pre-unification Italian statelets, Machiavelli transcended the given by asking how a great national state could be created on the Italian peninsula. This, fundamentally political, question is at the origin of Machiavellian political science which involves the creation of great states. Accordingly, for Gramsci, it is Machiavelli's political engagement that makes him a great scientist. Of course, in the *Prison Notebooks* the Modern Prince was no longer an individual, but the Communist Party. The point of view of the party has a "methodological" function because it is the institutional location in which the perspective of the participant and the observer (the working class, and the intellectual) fuse in a revolutionary synthesis, created through a vigorous internal democratic debate, aimed

at the overthrow of capitalism. Therefore, Gramsci would likely modify Burawoy's claim that "truth is ultimately rooted in and tested by the experience of subjugation" to say, "truth is ultimately rooted in and tested by the experience of subjection *as mediated by the political party*."

Thought about in this way, the problem of reflexivity reveals itself to be a misrecognized form of the political problem of party formation. It is in the party that the differences between observer and participant can be transformed and then abolished through pedagogical action. It is the party that provides the hypotheses that can then be tested by the action of the party itself as a permanent laboratory for making history. The "field" of scientific knowledge is now replaced by the strategic debates among the party's general staff, cadre element, and mass base in a process of vigorous internal debate. This, in sum, is the perspective of the Modern Prince.

It hardly needs to be pointed out that no such organization exists today in any of the advanced capitalist countries or, really, anywhere else. This is why sociologists misrecognize the properly political problem of party formation as the methodological problem of reflexivity; and why, accordingly, they are drawn to Bourdieu as the most sophisticated sociologist of reflexivity. But is it true that the "Marxist presence is in retreat and its connection to the world beyond is tenuous" (53)? This seems to me more accurate as an assessment of the situation in the two decades on either side of the millennium, than that of today. Since the 2008 financial crisis, the position of Marxism has improved quite dramatically. In the United States itself the emergence of *Jacobin* and the journal that is publishing these lines, as well as the sudden explosion and rejuvenation of the once moribund Democratic Socialists of America, is one sign. In Europe, Jeremy Corbyn's totally unexpected rise is even more remarkable. In Southern Europe, real left alternatives rooted in the Marxist tradition and with a serious Marxist intelligentsia have emerged. Without embracing an inane "optimism of the intellect," there is certainly room for "optimism of the will."

CONCLUSION

Bourdieu's contemporary preeminence indeed constitutes a puzzle. As these responses show, even his defenders are unable to explain in what respects he has developed explanations of class, of reproduction, and of change. Heilbron and Steinmetz simply restate what they view as Bourdieu's obviously valid class map, ignoring the fact that his evidence clearly cannot support the notion of class habitus. Burawoy, in contrast, admits that Bourdieu's class theory is nonexplanatory and tautological, and proposes instead that his real concern is misrecognition. But even if one accepts Burawoy's reading, that does not relieve Bourdieu of the task of demonstrating some nontrivial connection between class and taste. And here Burawoy is without meaningful suggestions; he asserts that class and taste are homologous, but this layers obscurity onto an already smoky argument. Furthermore, there is little evidence of a developing Bourdieusean research program growing out of *Distinction*. Instead of identifying and explaining anomalies, Bourdieusean research on class and culture has mostly focused on redefining its central concepts in ways that make them increasingly difficult to bring into relation with empirical evidence. This is the cardinal characteristic of a degenerating as opposed to progressive problem-shift.

What of social reproduction? Heilbron and Steinmetz here mostly fail to engage my points. They instead insist on the importance of practice, which boils down to asserting that most men and women most of the time are mired in misrecognition. I find it hard to see how that is a response. Burawoy usefully distinguishes between two mechanisms of social reproduction: the *illusio* produced by fields, and inculcation in the school system. But he fails to explain either why one should reduce all social life to fields, or why action in fields should produce *illusio*. He is also silent on my comparative claim that there is little connection between a well-articulated and autonomous school system, and social stability in advanced capitalism.

Finally, neither Heilbron and Steinmetz, nor Burawoy offer much defense of the notion that Bourdieu has a compelling theory of social change. The authors of the first critique ineptly try to make fun of me, failing to appreciate that Bourdieu operates with a question begging Durkheimian conception of differentiation. Burawoy tries to mount a defense, but then seems to give up on the idea and ends up in agreement with me.

My critics do, however, offer an alternative source of appeal aside from Bourdieu's attempts at explanation. Both Heilbron and Steinmetz, and Burawoy, suggest that reflexivity, the sociology of sociology, is Bourdieu's most distinctive contribution. The insistence on specifying both the role of conceptualization in the construction of social reality, and the position from which social knowledge is possible, leads to both good science and a good politics. I agree with my critics that reflexivity is the secret to Bourdieu's appeal, but not because it leads to a superior science, or to a superior politics. Instead, there are two other reasons why it is the core of Bourdieu's appeal: first, because the methodology of reflexivity entrenches a social ontology that gives massive importance to intellectuals, and particularly sociologists, and second because it converts the political problem of party formation, into a methodological conundrum within sociology. In this sense, the problems of the world become problems of sociology. My critics are right; reflexivity is the key to understanding Bourdieu's appeal. But this is because reflexivity is the key to Bourdieusean theory as an ideology of sociology.

What, then, is a more adequate way of understanding the connection between science and politics? Are those who would seek to explain the social world condemned to being trapped in scholastic misrecognition, while those who act in it condemned to being trapped in the misrecognition of the "field"? Bourdieu and those who follow him would say yes. But their answer itself is a form of misrecognition, or rather a type of ideology. For Bourdieu and his followers have mistaken a concrete, historically specific, political problem for a timeless methodological dilemma, and in so doing have rendered its solution impossible. The

type of "reflexive" sociology that the Bourdieuseans would encourage is a theoretical reflection of the very separation of political life from social science that is a characteristic of contemporary society. It is in this specific sense that the solution to the methodological dilemmas of contemporary sociology, and the fundamental organizational tasks of the Left, point in the same direction: toward the formation of a collective will, a Modern Prince, that would fuse science and a politics in a project aimed at transcending the society that creates their separation.

APPENDIX ON SCHOLARSHIP

Heilbron and Steinmetz find my article to be "sloppy and riddled with mistakes, misspellings, and omissions." Indeed, most of the substance of their article is devoted to attacking my characterizations of Bourdieu's work. They argue, first, that I mischaracterize Bourdieu's early work because I refer to *Sociologie de l'Algérie* as "masterful," and I referred to both *Sociologie de l'Algérie* and *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* as ethnographic studies. I leave to the judgment of readers whether *Sociologie de l'Algérie* is masterful. Heilbron and Steinmetz may have a point that neither book can be described as ethnography, since both lack much explicit discussion of the empirical materials on which they are based. Perhaps it would be better to describe these studies as "ethnological" rather than "ethnographic," but the point remains that both books are based empirically on direct experience and observation of the social relations Bourdieu is describing rather than survey research, or secondary and archival evidence. They are clearly the product of what David Swartz describes as a "'self-taught' ethnologist."[35] Or, as Heilbron[36] puts the point in *French Sociology*, "The first characteristic of Bourdieu's Algerian research was the intense fieldwork itself." If, however, Heilbron and Steinmetz insist, I would be quite willing to revise

35 David Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 22.

36 Johan Heilbron, *French Sociology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 199.

the offending phrase from "producing two masterful ethnographic studies" to "producing two studies." The change makes absolutely no difference to the substance of my argument.

The authors' second critique of my scholarship is that I incorrectly identified both the name of the center in which Bourdieu became Raymond's Aron's secretary, and that I incorrectly identified the date he assumed these responsibilities. Heilbron and Steinmetz claim that, "Bourdieu did become secretary to Raymond Aron's research center, not in 1964, but in 1962; the center in question was not the Center for Historical Sociology,' but the Center for European Sociology." These lines address my claim that "In 1964 Aron called on Bourdieu to administer his Ford-Foundation funded Center for Historical Sociology," which in turn is based on David Swartz's book. Heilbron and Steinmetz are right that I should have included "European" in front of "Center." On the other matters, however, the secondary literature is contradictory. Swartz, who in this matter follows Robert Colquhoun[37] states both that in 1961 Raymond Aron founded, with money from the Ford Foundation, the "European Center for Historical Sociology," and that Bourdieu "assume[d] administrative responsibilities of the center" in 1964.[38] Furthermore, Swartz states that Bourdieu "founded his own Center for European Sociology" after the 1968 split with Aron.[39] According to Heilbron's book, which relies on Joly's[40] account, Aron founded a "Center for European Sociology" in 1959, and Bourdieu became its "general secretary" in 1962, but "was elected director of studies two years later."[41] (This elevation in status perhaps explains Swartz's claim that Bourdieu assumed administrative duties in 1964). If Joly's account is to be believed, which seems reasonable since it is the most detailed,

37 Robert Colquhoun, *Raymond Aron* (London: Sage Publications, 1986), 339–340.

38 *Culture & Power*, 23.

39 *Culture & Power*, 24.

40 Marc Joly, *Devenir Norbert Elias: Histoire croisée d'un processus de reconnaissance scientifique: la reception française* (Paris: Fayard, 2012), 221–222.

41 *French Sociology*, 202.

what actually happened is that the Center for European Sociology split in two following the split between Bourdieu and Aron. Bourdieu now (in 1968) took charge of something called the "Center for European Sociology-Center for the Sociology of Education and Culture." Meanwhile Aron established the "European Center of Historical Sociology."[42] It is possible that Swartz incorrectly named Aron's original center, confusing it with the post-1968 institution. It is perhaps best to leave the resolution of this matter to historians of French sociology, especially since it has no bearing on any of the arguments made in my article.

The authors finally claim that I mischaracterize the dates of Bourdieu's works in writing that "By the late seventies and early eighties his major mature works had appeared." They are correct. The sentence should read "By the late seventies and early eighties his major mature works had *begun to* appear." Again, this revision has no implications for my argument.

Another somewhat disconnected matter is important to discuss here. The two authors attack my description of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* as a factory of Bourdieu's work. This is in part based on a willful misreading. They accuse me of stating that Bourdieu ran *Actes* like a factory (presumably while wearing a bowler and tails), a claim which I never made. What I did say is that *Actes* was a factory, in the sense that it produced an enormous amount of work by Bourdieu, his collaborators, and his students. The important substantive issue, whatever description the authors prefer, is that *Actes* was, and is, fundamentally a Bourdieusean journal. During his lifetime Bourdieu and his intellectual collaborators obviously hegemonized it: a completely understandable fact since they had, after all, founded it. These scholars, and above all Bourdieu himself, used the journal to publish pieces of research that would then often later appear in book form. But Heilbron and Steinmetz seem to want to suggest that *Actes* was something different: an open arena for competing theoretical positions and interdisciplinary

42 *Devenir Norbert Elias*, 221.

research, a collective intellectual establishing the truth through research and debate. Here is their characterization:

> *Actes* published work by some of the most innovative social scientists and humanists in the world: historians such as Christophe Charle, Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, Eric Hobsbawm, Jürgen Kocka, Carl Schorske, Joan Scott, and E.P. Thompson, sociologists like Cicourel, Elias, Goffman, Zelizer, anthropologists Bateson and Goody, economists Robert Boyer and Amartya Sen, linguists Ducrot, Encrevé, and Labov, classicist Jean Bollack, sinologists Jacques Gernet and Pierre-Etienne Will. To imply that this journal was run like a Bourdieu "factory" is laughable. It also fundamentally misrecognizes the project of *Actes* as an interdisciplinary crossroads of the critical social and human sciences. [47]

Whose view, mine, Heilbron's and Steinmetz's, is closer to the truth? *Actes* has usefully published an online index of authors for the period from 1975 to 2003.[43] Next to each author's name is the number of articles they published over the period. What does the distribution of articles per author look like? Over this period, *Actes* published 1,086 articles. The mean number of articles per author was about 2. But the maximum number of articles published by a single author was Pierre Bourdieu's 95 (more than three times greater than the next most productive author, Loïc Wacquant). Both the median and the modal number of articles was 1. Thus, the distribution of articles per author is highly skewed as figure 2 shows graphically.

Consider just the number articles published by authors who published 5 or more articles (including Heilbron). These accounted for 442 of the total 1,086 articles, or about 41 percent of the total number of articles. But only 39 of the 535 authors who published in the journal over this period published 5 or more articles. Thus, 7 percent of the

43 The information is available here: http://www.persee.fr/collection/arss.

authors accounted for just under half of the total intellectual output. Was this core group Bourdieusean? Broadly speaking, yes. It turns out that 29 of these highly productive authors can be classified as Bourdieuseans in that they systematically deploy a Bourdieusean framework in at least some of their published work. Together these authors produced 364 articles, accounting for approximately 34 percent of all the articles published in *Actes* over the period.

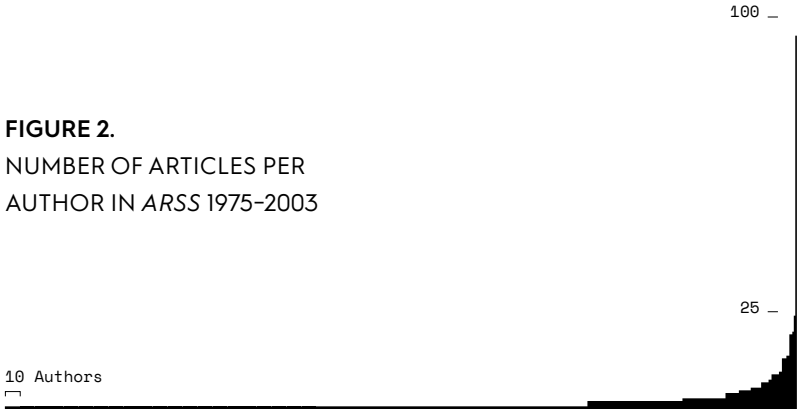

FIGURE 2.
NUMBER OF ARTICLES PER AUTHOR IN *ARSS* 1975–2003

What of the articles that were not produced by Bourdieuseans per se? Most of this work, for example Victor Karady's studies of the history of the university and French sociology, or Heilbron's studies of Belgian sociology and literary translation, fit in easily with the Bourdieusean program: in this case, the study of intellectuals and intellectual "fields."

We might next turn to how *Actes* treated alternative theoretical traditions, and especially Marxism. Heilbron and Steinmetz's reference to pieces by E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm might suggest an openness to this tradition. But this is true only in a highly relative way. Thompson's 1976 article is particularly revealing. The relevant fact about Thompson, apart from being perhaps the most famous social historian writing at the time and thus an attractive ornament, is that he had penned excoriating polemics against both Althusser and the group of scholars around the *New Left Review* who were systematically

introducing European Marxism to Britain at the time.[44] So, Thompson must have been a very congenial figure for Bourdieu, who would have seen in him a kindred spirit in the struggle against the Althusserians. Of course, this is extraordinarily paradoxical since Bourdieu's theoretical outlook was far closer to Althusser's than to Thompson's. It was left to Jean-Claude Chamboredon to square this circle in *Actes*, explaining in his preface to Thompson's article that *The Making of the English Working Class* broke with "the pious cult of the remembrance of the origins of the working class" and "the moving description of workers' exploitation."[45] Obviously, however, Thompson's masterpiece is full of "moving descriptions of workers' exploitation"; indeed one of its central points is to evoke the experience of exploitation, and to point out that it was named and discussed as such by members of the working class.[46] Here, intellectual-political sympathy trumped a yawning chasm of difference in theoretical approach.

The case of Eric Hobsbawm is slightly different. The crucial point about him is that he has always worn his Marxism lightly: there is very little explicit theoretical stance-taking in his work. The two pieces that he published in *Actes*, a translation of a brilliant study on the changing position of women in popular democratic and socialist iconography, and a brief conceptual piece on ethnic conflict, posed no particular challenges to Bourdieusean sociology. Furthermore, the two men had

44 This polemic is one of the stranger episodes in the history of the intellectual left since Thompson and his polemical targets had largely the same view of historical development: for both, English capitalism, unlike its French counterpart, had emerged within the institutional framework of a preexisting state and was characterized by a gradual reconversion of the gentry rather than a revolutionary cataclysm. In his article for *Actes*, "Modes de domination et révolutions en Angleterre," 135–151, 135, Thompson references this polemic when he criticizes "a history where classes are metaphorical entities and where a sociology of class and class-consciousness is lacking — all characteristic of attempts to reconstruct and re-evaluate English history undertaken by certain currents of the English new left" [AKA Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn].

45 Jean-Claude Chamboredon, "Modes de domination et révolutions en Angleterre," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 2–3 (1976): 133–135, 134.

46 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963), 445.

a liking for one another, as Hobsbawm's recently published appreciation of Bourdieu shows.[47]

The other main Marxist figure to appear in *Actes*, not mentioned by Heilbron and Steinmetz, is Michael Burawoy with three contributions: a famous review of Jon Elster's book, *Making Sense of Marx*; an explanation of the paradox that workers under state socialism turn out to be more class conscious than under capitalism; and finally, a republication of Burawoy's influential ASA keynote speech on public sociology. Interestingly, one part of Burawoy's work that has yet to appear in *Actes* is his extremely sharp critical evaluation of Bourdieu.

Let us then be serious. Alternative theoretical traditions, and particularly Marxism, appear in *Actes* in a very limited and non-threatening way. The journal has never established an open dialogue with various points of view on a given sociological problem. The "collective intellectual" operates on strictly Bourdieusean terms.

How could one characterize this journal then? The intellectual tone of the review was provided by a core of highly productive Bourdieuseans; arranged around this core was a broader group of contributors, including the very occasional eminent Marxist. But the main purpose of the journal was clearly to incubate work in the Bourdiuesean conceptual framework, and more specifically, to provide a forum for Bourdieu himself to develop his ideas. Considering this evidence then, the description of *Actes* as a Bourdieu factory seems rather nearer the mark than an "interdisciplinary crossroads of the critical social and human sciences." But perhaps more importantly the two descriptions are not even necessarily incompatible. For in reality *Actes* was both an interdisciplinary crossroad and a Bourdieu factory. ⊬

Thanks to Michael Burawoy, Rebecca Jean Emigh, Christopher Muller, Sandra Susan Smith, and Emanuela Tallo for comments on this draft and the initial article. Given the nature of this discussion it is more than usually necessary to insist that the responsibility for what I have written here is mine alone.

47 Eric Hobsbawm, "Pierre Bourdieu," *New Left Review* 101 (2016): 37–47, 38.

The Chinese Communist Party's removal of term limits for the country's president took many observers by surprise. This is only because so many of them saw China's turn to markets as a harbinger of a coming political liberalization. But there is not, and never was, any justification for such expectations. Markets have a deep and abiding connection with authoritarianism, and in its latest turn, the Communist Party is merely affirming this link. The real reason for the decision lies in its economic policy, which is creating political contradictions that threaten to overwhelm the political elite.

XI JINPING'S ABSOLUTIST TURN

HO-FUNG HUNG

This past March, when Xi Jinping's long-rumored intention to abolish presidential term limits finally materialized, thereby implanting him as dictator for life, many commentators expressed surprise. It even triggered some consternation among China hands in the US foreign policy establishment. *Foreign Affairs* magazine published an article by two Obama-era Asia-policy officials Kurt Campbell and Ely Ratner, who declared that American foreign policy "has got China wrong" all along.[1] US China policy since Nixon's 1972 visit has always been grounded, they averred, on the erroneous assumption that China's turn to markets will also trigger a shift toward political liberalization. But Xi's move to abolish presidential term limits seems to have killed any move toward liberalism.

1 Kurt Campbell and Ely Ratner, "The China Reckoning: How Beijing Defied American Expectations," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2018).

THE LIBERAL ILLUSION OF CHINA AND ITS DISCONTENTS

To be fair, Xi's abolition of presidential term limits only moves China back to the mainstream of authoritarian regimes around the world. Dictators rarely voluntarily retire — it usually takes death or a putsch of some kind to remove them. So when Deng Xiaoping introduced the two five-year term limit for presidents in the Constitution in 1982, it moved China away from the more common pattern of authoritarianism. At the peak growth era of the China Boom, the country was led by Jiang Zemin for ten years and by Hu Jintao for another ten. And under both presidents, competing factions of the CCP elite, many of whom were offspring of revolutionary leaders who helped found the People's Republic and were dubbed "the princelings," maintained a balance of power and divided up the dominant sectors of the economy among themselves.

This collective leadership model was long viewed by Western China watchers as an interim arrangement toward more political inclusion, opening, and liberalization. But in fact, it was more akin to feudal ruling arrangements in early modern Europe or domination by the oligarchs in Yeltsin's Russia. As such, Xi's abolition of term limits is more like an attack on the aristocracy by a centralizing monarch such as Louis XIV after the *Fronde* or Putin's attack on the oligarchs. It is the recurrence of a perennial theme of the monarch vs. the lords in autocratic regimes.

Where Xi's move might lead to is highly uncertain, but to many China watchers who secretly shared the passion of Francis Fukuyama's *End of History and the Last Man*, it is a bucket of cold water against their China dream: the dream of China's convergence with Western liberal democracy. Even more disconcerting to them is Xi's (and Hu's) explicit policy of privileging the economy's state sector and squeezing private, as well as foreign, enterprises. This means that even in its economy, China refuses to converge with the Western liberal model.

The China hands' shock at Xi Jinping's moves does not stem from his actions, but more from their entrenched notions about a necessary

convergence with the West. Back in the fall of 2012 when Xi Jinping assumed the leadership of the CCP, many Western journalists and authors — as they always do when a new leadership takes hold — predicted that the new leader would hasten the turn toward economic and political reforms. For example, at the *New York Times*, Nicholas Kristof, one of the most influential liberal authors in the US, wrote:

> Here is my prediction about China: The new paramount leader, Xi Jinping, will spearhead a resurgence of economic reform, and probably some political easing as well. Mao's body will be hauled out of Tiananmen Square on his watch, and Liu Xiaobo, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning writer, will be released from prison.[2]

The foundation of Kristoff's speculation is that Xi's father was a pioneer of economic reform and did not agree with the Tiananmen crackdown back in 1989; that Xi sent his daughter to Harvard; and that an educated and affluent middle class in China will make party control much more difficult, if not impossible.

This type of argument is cliché, and may not seem convincing. After the bloody crackdown on Tiananmen in 1989 and the return to hard authoritarian rule in the 1990s, the expectation that market reform would eventually bring political opening in China should have been dashed once and for all. But many Western intellectuals stubbornly clung to such illusions, despite the strengthening of the capitalist authoritarian state in post-Tiananmen China.

Why this is so is an interesting question for the sociology of knowledge. I suspect it has something to do with the US economic elite's need to continue their business with China and not let human rights issues stand in the way of making money.[3] In the early Clinton

2 Nicholas Kristoff, "Looking for a Jump-start in China," *New York Times*, January 5, 2013.

3 About a decade ago, journalist James Mann published *The China Fantasy: Why Capitalism Will Not Bring Democracy to China* (Penguin, 2008), critiquing the naïve expectation of political liberalization among China watchers. Not surprisingly, the reception

administration, organized labor and human rights activists — two key bases of Clinton's presidential campaign — fought to slow US free trade with China by way of linking human rights considerations with Chinese exports' low-tariff access to the US market. In the end, Clinton was swayed by large-scale business lobbying efforts. Disappointing his labor and human rights constituencies, in 1994 Clinton declared that he would delink any human rights considerations from trade relations with China.

Clinton justified his line of economic engagement by insisting that it would inevitably sow the seeds for political liberalization as well. As Clinton later expressed in his own words, "it will become increasingly difficult to maintain the closed political system [in China] in an ever more open economy and society … [a] pragmatic policy of engagement is the best way to advance our fundamental interests and values [in China]."[4] This argument follows the logic of trickle-down theory. Just as the free market will eventually benefit the poor, so too the free market will bring liberty and democracy to China; meaning, we can safely set aside our concerns about any current authoritarianism on display.

Concomitant with the view that China's integration with the global economy will bring political liberalization of the regime, there was a slightly more sophisticated variant that rejected the illusion that the regime would change by gradual reform, insisting instead this change would come by way of internal conflicts, leading to collapse. David Shambaugh's *Wall Street Journal* article "The Coming Chinese Crackup," published in 2015, is a prime example of such a view. In the article, Shambaugh predicts that economic slowdown, combined with Xi's political purges in the name of an anti-corruption campaign, will result in a regime implosion:

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of the book in the China policy establishment was cool at the time of its publication.

4 "Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by the President in Address on China and the National Interest," White House, October 24, 1997.

> We should watch for the day when the regime's propaganda agents and its internal security apparatus start becoming lax in enforcing the party's writ—or when they begin to identify with dissidents, like the East German Stasi agent in the film "The Lives of Others" who came to sympathize with the targets of his spying. When human empathy starts to win out over ossified authority, the endgame of Chinese communism will really have begun.[5]

In the end, Shambaugh may be right; it is too early to tell. But with so many predictions about the collapse of the CCP regime (mainly from staunchly anticommunist intellectuals on the Right) having failed in the past, one might urge caution about the prospect of an implosion of the regime.

A third scenario, which I proposed at the time, was that the Chinese party-state might become both more authoritarian and less economically dynamic:

> It is possible that the CCP elite, no matter how much they dislike Xi and his anti-corruption campaign, will still prefer not to rock the boat. They are aware that they are nobody without the protection of the party-state, and their privileges will be under far greater threat in the wake of a regime collapse. It is also possible that in the years of pacification and domestication following the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, China's civil society and dissidents have become so timid and cornered that they are incapable of taking advantage of any cracks in the regime.... [B]esides the endgame of CCP rule, we should also ponder another possible scenario: the rise of a hysteric and suffocating dictatorial regime which maintains its draconian control over a society gradually losing its dynamism. Perhaps we can call this hypothetical regime North Korea lite.[6]

5 David Shambaugh, "The Coming Chinese Crackup," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2015.

6 Ho-fung Hung, Remarks in the symposium "When Will China's Government Col-

And in a Chinese essay published in 2016, I speculated that "as Xi's purges damaged too many vested interests and set the precedent of purging high-ranking officials from previous governments, he might worry that he will be persecuted once he steps down. Hence he might try to move toward the normal pattern of Asian authoritarian state, embracing lifelong dictatorship, and even hereditary dictatorship."[7]

This is more or less what has transpired. The key to understanding lies in the ebb and flow of the Chinese political economy, and in particular, the weakening of its economic tempo.

ECONOMIC ORIGINS OF AUTHORITARIAN HARDENING

China's economic boom started in the 1980s as a continuation of the East Asian "miracle," which took off in the 1960s when US and European manufacturing firms sought low-cost labor in the region. But the supply of rural-originated, low-wage labor in Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan is shallow. And when these economies ascended to middle-to high-income levels in the world income hierarchy and their wages began to rise, the economic situation in China presented an alternative. China's market reforms were running into difficulties in the late 1980s and early 1990s because of hyperinflation and balance-of-payment deficits. This prompted the Chinese government to shift to an export-oriented model of development through a massive one-off devaluation of the yuan in 1994 and a series of reforms that precipitated a flood of rural migrant labor into export-processing zones in the country's coastal areas, offering a new source of low-wage labor. This development firmly plugged China into the global free-trade order. The country then became a whirlpool that sucked in industrial

lapse?" *Foreign Policy*, March 13, 2015.

7 Ho-fung Hung, "Foreword" in Szu-chien Hsu, ed., *The Grand Chess Game of Xi Jinping: Limits of Post-Totalitarian Transitions* [習近平大棋局：後極權轉型的極限] (Taipei, Taiwan: Left Bank, 2016).

capital and manufacturing jobs from around the world to become the "workshop of the world," though most export-oriented factories in China were subordinated to transnational corporations headquartered in the Global North.[8]

During the pre-2008 boom years, as China rode the wave of its new export-oriented model, it accumulated enormous foreign-exchange reserves, mostly in the form of US dollar assets. Without these reserves, Beijing would not have been able to increase the money supply recklessly in the form of lax state-bank lending. The export sector and the rising reserves it brought made a debt-financed investment spree possible in China between 2000 and 2008 without repeating the economic malaise of many Southeast Asian economies on the eve of the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–98. These other East Asian economies had also witnessed explosions in debt-fueled investment, but without commensurate increases in foreign-exchange reserves, making them vulnerable to capital flight and economic collapse. The so-called "twin engines" of growth of the Chinese boom, the export sector and fixed-asset investment, are therefore grounded on the single engine of exports.

While the export sector of China was dominated by small to medium private or foreign enterprises, the fixed-asset investment sector, such as infrastructure construction and real estate development, has been mostly dominated by state-owned companies. Since the reform of state-owned enterprises in the 1990s, different state sectors have become quasi-fiefdoms held by high-ranking party members. This division of the expanding economic pie of the state sector on the back of a dynamic private, export-oriented sector is the foundation of the balance of power among competing elite factions and the "collective leadership" of the party-state in the 1990s and 2000s.

Things began to unravel when China's export-led growth hit a wall in 2008–9, when the global recession also hit American and European markets. Seeing a sudden drop in two of its largest export markets, the

8 Ho-fung Hung, *The China Boom: Why China Will Not Rule the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), Chapter 3.

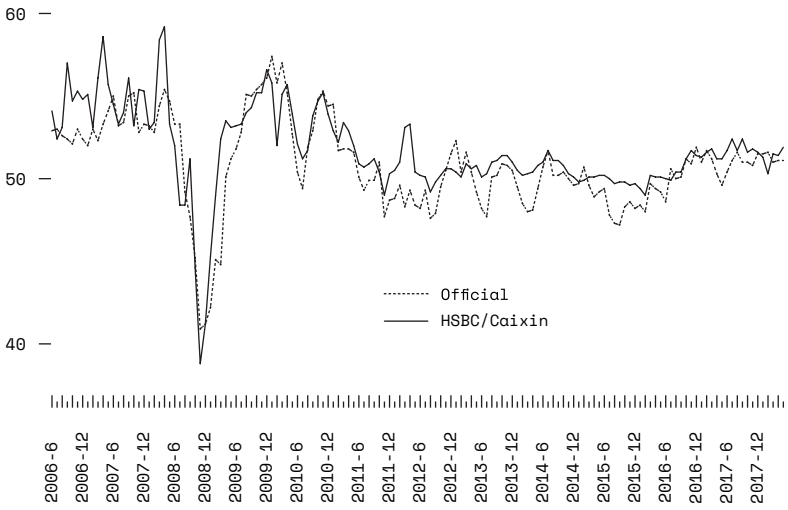
Chinese government swiftly rolled out an aggressive stimulus program that successfully brought about a strong economic rebound. But there was a catch. Whereas the enormous growth in the 1990s and 2000s had been fueled by a massive export boom, the post-2008 boom was driven by reckless investment expansion funded by a state-bank financial stimulus. This created a gigantic debt bubble no longer matched by commensurate expansion of the foreign-exchange reserve. Between 2008 and late 2017, outstanding debt in China skyrocketed from 148 percent of GDP to over 250 percent, and is now approaching 300 percent, exceeding the level in the US and most other developing countries.[9] China's foreign-exchange reserve ended its long, uninterrupted rise and started to stagnate, or even shrink, in 2014, and that decline could only be contained via draconian measures that restricted capital outflow after 2015. In the meantime, the many redundant construction projects and infrastructure resulting from the debt-fueled economic rebound are not going to be profitable, at least not any time soon. The repayment and servicing of the debt is going to be challenging, and a major ticking time bomb of debt has formed. China has therefore run out of room for growth through fixed-asset investment while the export sector has not rebounded to the pre-2008 level.[10]

The manufacturing capacity and infrastructure, apartments, coal mines, steel mills, etc., that expanded rapidly during the boom time and the post-2008 rebound have become excess capacity with falling profit rates. This has trapped China in a typical overaccumulation crisis epitomized by the many ghost towns and shutdown factories across the country. This overaccumulation crisis in the Chinese economy is the origin of the stock market meltdown and beginning of capital flight that drove the sharp devaluation of Chinese currency in 2015–16. Stability came in 2016 only with extreme measures to stem capital flight and a new round of loan surge, at the price of further buildup of indebtedness throughout the economy. This impasse of the Chinese economy

9 Institute of International Finance, "Global Debt Monitor" (October 2017).

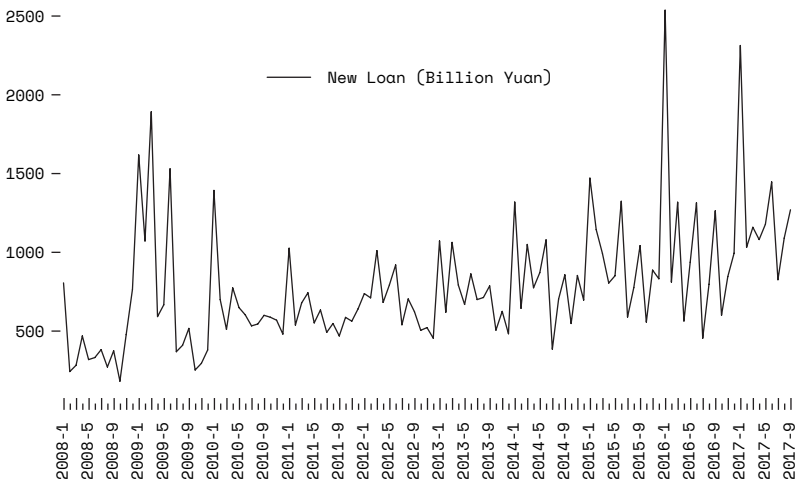
10 Ho-fung Hung, *The China Boom: Why China Will Not Rule the World*, Chapter 6.

FIGURE 1. CHINA'S MANUFACTURING PURCHASING MANAGER INDEX, 2006–2018



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, HSBC/Caixin

FIGURE 2. MONTHLY NEW LENDING IN RMB



Source: People's Bank of China

is illustrated by the stagnation of manufacturing expansion as shown in the Purchasing Manager Index (PMI) for the manufacturing sector that hovered around the stagnation line of 50, coupled with corresponding new loan data that shows, when compared with the PMI data, the diminishing effectiveness of loan stimulus after the 2009–10 stimulus.

It is in the context of an economic pie which has ceased to grow, with the debt bomb ticking, that the elite who control the state sector seek capital flight, encroach on the private sector and foreign companies, and intensify their fights with one another, resembling the dynamics of absolutist consolidation amidst the seventeenth-century crisis in Europe. The inter-elite feuding, rumored coups, and downfall of princelings Bo Xilai and the head of the "petroleum gang" Zhou Yongkang in the early days of Xi Jinping presidency can be all understood in this light. Xi's frenetic campaign to take out rivals through the anti-corruption campaign and his relentless quest to centralize power reflect no more than a natural strategy of survival in an increasingly hostile environment: take them all out before they take me.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The absolutist consolidation of Xi Jinping is now complete. With the economy continuing to cool and the debt bomb ticking, some are asking whether his dictatorship will last. Perhaps not, but it is important to remember that authoritarian regimes can be resilient in the face of economic difficulty if they harnesses the force of nationalism and internal repression. The survival of North Korea's Kim dynasty, the Chavez–Maduro regime's sustainability, and, needless to say, the Putin presidency in the middle of economic disasters are all cases in point.

As things stand, there are two paths forward for the Chinese economy. One is a continuation of the slowdown and government bailout of heavily indebted enterprises. It is what Japan went through in its lost decade(s) after the 1990s. In this case, Xi's dictatorship could still survive, but it will become a besieged, defensive, and inward-looking one.

The second possible path is that Chinese capital would seek to revive profitability through moving outward to other parts of the world. As Lenin famously noted in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, capital exports activities as a way out of an overaccumulation crisis of the domestic economy, which inevitably leads to the expansion of military and geopolitical power for the host countries, giving rise to spheres of influence among capital-exporting powers. I have argued elsewhere that this is exactly what China is doing with its active engagement with other developing regions, as represented by Xi's Belt and Road Initiative.[11] If this expansionary attempt takes hold, then Xi will become truly an "emperor" of a Chinese empire, bringing China into a head-on collision with the spheres of influence of other great powers, such as Russia (in Central Asia) and the US (in maritime East and Southeast Asia). In such case, we might see the intensification of interimperial rivalry or wars.

Only time will tell what path the Chinese economy and political leaders will actually take in the future. ⊰

11 Ho-fung Hung, forthcoming, "China and the Global South: Rhetoric and Reality" in Thomas Fingar and Jean Oi, eds., *Challenges and Choices in China's Future.*

Cyril Ramaphosa's rise to the presidency is a watershed moment in the history of post-apartheid South Africa. The Zuma years plunged South Africa into an abyss of corruption and deepening economic, social, and political crises. Now that the sun has set on that regime, we can ask what Ramaphosa's presidency means for the future of the country. While there is a significant opening for the Left, its political organization is still not to the point to ensure significant gains. I provide a map of the political terrain along with an account of the contending interests in conflict.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEFT IN THE TIME OF RAMAPHOSA

MICHAEL NASSEN SMITH

The ANC's legacy is on the dock. Once a symbol of moral and political authority, the Zuma era saw the world-renowned liberation movement sink to embarrassing lows. Concern about the ANC's ability to realize a prosperous post-apartheid South Africa, however, began long before the Zuma era. As poverty persisted and inequality deepened, so did the party's national reputation, and belief in its promise of a "rainbow nation," wane.[1]

Under the ANC's watch, post-apartheid South Africa has been characterized by deindustrialization, rising unemployment (26.7 percent in the third quarter of 2017[2]), financialization and capital flight, wage

1 The ANC's decline in the electoral scene began in the 2000s. It suffered a fall from 68 percent of the electoral vote in 2004 to 62 percent in 2014. There has since been an even more rapid decline. In 2016, the ANC lost a number of key metros including Nelson Mandela Bay, the City of Tshwane, and City of Johannesburg, in the local government elections. In December 2017, 32 percent of those surveyed in the South African Citizen Survey said they "felt close" to the ANC. This is the lowest figure since 1994. See Rob Mattes, "Zuma, ANC's decline chronicled in new survey," *IOL*.

2 Statistics South Africa, "Quarterly Labour Force Survey- QLFS Q4: 2017," STATS SA, Accessed May 1, 2018, http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=10884.

repression, and growing household debt. South Africa remains the most unequal country in the world, with a Gini coefficient of 0.63 in 2015. The top percentile households hold 70.9 percent of national wealth while the bottom 60 percent holds a mere 7 percent. Today, 76 percent of South Africans face an imminent threat of falling below the poverty line.[3] These are the figures behind daily, and increasingly violent, civil unrest.

Revisiting the history of the ANC's capitulation to local and international business interests, and the devastation it has wracked on the South African economy, has been the subject of serious, contested, and ongoing analysis among scholars and activists. [4] For our purposes, it is only necessary to underscore the mood in the country and the eagerness with which ordinary people are reconsidering the legacy of the struggle. How is it that a liberation movement that promised so much has fallen so short of its aims, producing a regime defined by corruption and "state capture"?

Jacob Zuma was undoubtedly a personification of the slow disintegration of the ANC and a victim of aggressive rebuke across the political spectrum. However, he was also aware of broader societal discontent that surrounded him, and that this grievance cut deeper than concerns about corruption and "state capture." His rise to power, one should recall, was advanced by a Left that believed it was Zuma who would right the wrongs of Mbeki's capitulation to neoliberal capitalism.[5] Zuma's controversial and alleged partners in corruption, the Gupta

3 The World Bank, "Overcoming Poverty and Inequality in South Africa: An Assessment of Drivers, Constraints and Opportunities," (Washington: The World Bank, 2018), xv, xvi, xix, xx.

4 For an outline of this history see a recent contribution to this journal in Sam Ashman, Zachary Levension, and Trevor Ngwane, "South Africa's ANC: The Beginning of the End," *Catalyst* 1, no. 2 (Summer 2017).

5 While it was generally accepted that the Mbeki faction of the ANC had embarked on what the SACP called a "1996 Class Project," not all agreed that Zuma was the right man to put the Left in the alliance in the ascendency. For Ronnie Kasrils, longtime member of the SACP, the ANC's election of Zuma was the beginning of the end of his association with a party he devoted much of his life. See Ronnie Kasrils, "Sabotaging Apartheid," *Jacobin*, March 11, 2017.

family, deployed their propaganda machine, Bell Pottinger, to exploit whatever was left of this sentiment in the final years of Zuma's rule. And so came the rhetoric of Radical Economic Transformation (RET) and the view that "white monopoly capital" was still behind it all; not only the failed transition, but also the accusations of corruption levelled against the ANC government. For a moment, the world was upside down. The Zuma faction in the ANC was not a group facilitating corruption and state capture but was rather the vanguard of the struggle against "white monopoly capital" and "Western imperialism."[6] Though the view gained limited traction beyond the Zuma faction in the ANC, it played on a potent desire for the reigniting of what one commentator has called a "suspended" revolution.[7]

With Zuma gone, Ramaphosa, formerly a man of the Left turned rand billionaire, embarks on his presidency in a volatile and combustible arena in which his party, the ANC, faces an existential crisis. Much of his presidency will be a delicate balancing act, managing forces and interests within and outside his party. Ramaphosa knows he must reach out and acknowledge the growing sense of betrayal and the desire for radical change among the population. Indeed, although Zuma goes, the rhetoric of "Radical Economic Transformation" remains official ANC policy. At the same time, Ramaphosa must allay the fears of local and international capital (of which he is himself an active player). He will not deliver choices for this contradictory set of demands in a vacuum. Put another way, the outcome of the Ramaphosa presidency will be determined by the nature of forthcoming contestations within society, represented not only by competing factions within the ANC, but also

6 For an analysis on how patronage politics explains the emergence of "Radical Economic Transformation" in ANC policy discourse in 2017, see Steven Friedman, "The odd meaning of 'radical economic transformation' in South Africa," *The Conversation*, February 15, 2017. For a general discussion on the mechanics of "state capture" under the Zuma regime and the use of "white monopoly capital" and RET as propaganda devices, see Haroon Bhorat, Ivor Chipkin, Mzukisi Qobo, Lumkile Mondi, and Mark Swilling, "Betrayal of the Promise: How South Africa is Being Stolen," (State Capacity Research, 2017).

7 Adam Habib, *South Africa's Suspended Revolution* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2013).

the interests of the working class, historically entrenched capital, and the emergent, and increasingly powerful, black elite.

THE ANC'S CONTINUED ELECTORAL HEGEMONY

The ANC's 2017 elective conference was the most significant since the post-apartheid era. A Ramaphosa loss could have triggered another split within the party and this would have been far more damaging than the Congress of the People and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) departures that came in 2008 and 2013, respectively.[8] With Ramaphosa at the helm, the party is still not immune to the threat of fracture.[9] Running against Jacob Zuma's ex-wife Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, he eked out a victory with a narrow margin of 2,440 votes against her 2,261. The fragile balance of power in the ANC is revealed in the National Executive Committee, which is split down the middle between the Ramaphosa and Zuma factions.

In this difficult terrain, Ramaphosa and his allies want to rebuild the ANC as the hegemonic political force in society. To do so requires integrity be restored to an organization that had all but lost it during the Zuma years. Yet the rot within the ANC goes deeper than what Zuma did to it. Factionalism has eroded the party at all levels and careerism has increasingly dominated the process of leadership and candidate selection. There has been growing violence within the organization, with political killings staining election processes, especially in Kwa-Zulu-Natal. The corporatization and entrenchment of hierarchical structures within the party, and growing tensions between the alliance partners of COSATU and the SACP, add further strain. So deep are the issues confronting the ANC that former president Kgalema Motlanthe

8 Susan Booysen, "Coalitions and Alliances Demarcate Crossroads in ANC trajectories," *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy* 68 (January 2018): 6-10.

9 Zuma loyalists in Kwa-Zulu Natal are allegedly planning to split from the ANC and form a new alliance if they cannot oust Ramaphosa as party leader. See Qaanitah Hunter and Sibongakonke Shoba, "Angry Zuma loyalists threaten ANC split, plan to make Cyril pay," Times Live, April 8, 2018.

went as far as to suggest that the party ought to lose the 2019 elections in order to gain the necessary perspective for total organizational renewal.[10]

As incumbent president, Ramaphosa, does not have the luxury to indulge in such speculation. Instead, he has moved swiftly to right the ship. Changes to the boards and senior management of a number of state-owned enterprises have been secured. The South African Revenue Services (SARS) commissioner has been suspended. In addition, the courts have been encouraged to pursue corruption charges against the former president, while the Gupta brothers have been charged and their assets seized.

The Electoral Scene

Although Ramaphosa's ANC faces an uphill battle for renewal, its leaders can be relieved that its electoral dominance is not seriously threatened by the main opposition parties. Both the Democratic Alliance (DA) and EFF shaped their recent identities on the campaign to end Zuma's presidency. Yet with that job is complete, significant weaknesses are exposed to the voting public.

The official opposition, the DA, has grown significantly over the course of the past decade, grabbing a number of the country's metros in the recent local government elections. However, it is a party prone to embarrassing crises, not least of which were repeated ill-judged attempts by Helen Zille, former head of party and Premier of the Western Cape, to extoll the virtues of colonialism.[11] Struggling to shed its reputation as a "white party," the DA continues to lack a substantive connection with a base beyond that demographic, even as its black membership is growing incrementally.

The DA finds itself in a contradictory situation: it must reach out to a population hungry for radical change while also appeasing a traditional

10 Kgalema Motlanthe, "Motlanthe on BBC Hard Talk — an unrehabilitated ANC will lose the next election," *BBC HardTalk,* September 13, 2017.

11 See Helen Zille, "From the Inside: Lessons from Singapore," *The Daily Maverick,* March 20, 2017.

base committed to an unreconstructed neoliberalism. Tensions have begun to surface as the party's young members increasingly raise the issue of transformation, in terms of racial composition and economic policy. Phumzile van Damme, a young black member of the DA, has argued that her party should move away from a rigid liberal ideology towards a historically minded "liberal approach that is more relevant to addressing the inequality in South Africa."[12] More recently, Mmusi Maimane, the party leader, has seemed to endorse this with a call for "African liberalism."[13] In response to van Damme, a member of the Institute for Race Relations (IRR), an independent organization sympathetic to the official opposition, has expressed a concern that the DA is at risk of rejecting liberalism's emphasis on individual freedom for "socialism's group rights."[14]

Although the view that the DA is at risk of transforming into a socialist party is unfounded, these debates betoken a growing internal tension. While the DA's young leadership attempts to steer away from its neoliberal roots, what would differentiate its program from the ANC under Ramaphosa? Indeed, the crucial black urban vote may lie beyond its reach should the ANC renewal project gain steam. The party's own internal polling seems to support this view.[15]

12 See Phumzile van Damme, "The DA has not forsaken its liberal values," *Politicsweb*, November 9, 2017, http://www.politicsweb.co.za/opinion/the-da-has-not-forsaken-its-liberal-values.

13 See Mmusi Maimane, "Building an African Liberal Agenda," Speech, DA Federal Congress, Tshwane, April 7, 2018.

14 See Sara Gon, "The DA must dare to be different," *Politicsweb*, November 14, 2017. For the article that set off the debate see Frans Cronje, "The DA's inexplicable attack on itself," *Politicsweb*, November 5, 2017, http://www.politicsweb.co.za/opinion/the-das-inexplicable-attack-on-itself. Gon and Cronje's worry that the DA is at risk of becoming a socialist party, while ridiculous, is not an uncommon refrain. Indeed, while Ramaphosa is accused of being a neoliberal on the Left, the country's Right believes that he is a committed Marxist-Leninist. It is a peculiar set of contradictory judgments unique to South Africa's political history. See for example Ivo Vegter, "A smart, charismatic socialist is a dangerous socialist," The Daily Maverick, February 20, 2018.

15 See Natasha Marrian, "Polls show DA support is in the doldrums," *Business Day*, March 8, 2018, https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/politics/2018-03-08-poll-shows-da-support-is-in-doldrums/.

Although holding a far smaller share of the electorate, the EFF has often seemed to be the ANC's most significant threat. The EFF has billed itself as the ANC's guilty conscience, reminding the ruling party, and the country, of the former's failure to live up to its promise of realizing the Freedom Charter, the ANC and broader Charterist movement's proposal for what an emancipated South Africa would look like.[16] Indeed, the EFF played a central role in the removal of Zuma, arguing that the former president had plunged the ANC to depths from which it could not return. However, the EFF remains an enigmatic force in South Africa's body politic with passionate disagreement, on the Left as much as the Right, about whether its influence has been on the whole positive or negative.

In 2018, Malema's party has been embroiled in controversy and its members have been guilty of uttering crude racial slurs.[17] The EFF have built an identity on a brash and unrestrained call for justice, yet this has often slipped beyond enthusiasm into recklessness. In addition, although they have actively promoted land reform, a necessary and urgent conversation, the ANC may have outflanked them by calling for land expropriation without compensation, and will now attempt to take ownership of the issue. This portends a future in which the EFF pushes radical policy, and the ANC cushions with more pragmatic solutions. Such a relationship hints at another possibility, with Ramaphosa himself being so bold as to call the EFF "back home."[18] While

16 See The Congress of the People, "The Freedom Charter," Statement, Kliptown, June 26, 1955.

17 See Judith February, "EFF and H&M: Let's ask the tough questions," *The Daily Maverick*, January 17, 2018; Ernest Mabuza, "EFF member apologies for inciting hate against whites," *The Daily Maverick*, March 15, 2018.

18 Citizen Reporter, "Ramaphosa declared he'd love to have Malema, EFF back in the ANC," *The Citizen*, March 11, 2018. Malema's suspension from the ANC had much to do with his strained relationship with Jacob Zuma and provided the catalyst for the birth of the EFF as Malema's loyal followers from his time as leader of the ANC Youth League joined him outside of the ruling party. This suspension was not agreed upon by all in the ANC at the time and there remains a strong desire within the ruling party to negotiate return of its former members. See Carien du Plessis and Sabelo Ndlangisa, "Motlanthe: Axing Malema was wrong," *News24*, September 30, 2012, https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Politics/Motlanthe-Axing-Malema-was-wrong-20120930. It has been alleged that before her passing Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was trying to

Malema has rejected this request out of hand, the ANC will continue to test the resolve of their former Youth League leader leading up to the 2019 elections and beyond.[19] Indeed, the EFF have agreed to hold talks about how to form a partnership in the future.[20]

THE LEFT IN THE TIME OF RAMAPHOSA

At the time of liberation in 1994, the South African left was thought to be on the cusp of realizing a socialist revolution.[21] In 2018, it is weak and fractured, with socialism far from the agenda. All quarters of the Left are aware of the limitations of a Ramaphosa presidency and the potential it has to advance the interests of the working class. The starkness of those limitations, however, vary depending on whether the vantage point is inside or outside of the tripartite alliance.

Both the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) were central players in the national anti-Zuma campaign and were enthusiastic promoters of Ramaphosa's ANC presidential candidacy.[22] Although remaining circumspect about the prospects for the working class, their official line is to give Ramaphosa a chance. His victory, in the view of COSATU and the SACP, signals a potential renewal of the alliance, yet only if this process is guided by terms set by the ANC's junior partners.

convince Malema, with whom she enjoyed a close relationship, to return to the ruling party. She vowed to "bring him [Malema] home to the ANC. See SABC, "Madikizela-Mandela intends to bring back Malema to ANC," *SABC News,* April 3, 2018.

19 Drum Online, "'I won't do it. That thing is dead'- Malema on return to ANC," *News24,* March 12, 2018.

20 Sifiso Zulu, "Report: ANC, EFF in Talks About Possible Alliance," *EWN,* April 14, 2018.

21 For example, in 1986, a mere eight years before the collapse of apartheid, Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff believed that South Africa had "entered a stage of overt and seemingly irreversible revolutionary struggle." They maintained that a stabilization of capitalism in the country "… would be a stunning defeat for the world revolution." Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff, "The Stakes in South Africa," *Monthly Review* 37, no. 11 (April 1986): 1–6.

22 While Zuma was booted from COSATU Congress, Ramaphosa was welcomed before he was elected. SACP also hosted Ramaphosa as keynote speaker.

Outside of the alliance, the newly configured South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) have no such faith in Ramaphosa's regime. In their view, the president's capitulation to big business in the 1990s, and his personal role in the events leading up to the Marikana massacre, where thirty-four miners were gunned down by police, is an omen of things to come. Ramaphosa, who was leader of the National Union of Mineworkers in the 1980s is now, in the words of Zwelinzima Vavi, "a deeply compromised capitalist billionaire."[23] For Vavi, the Secretary General of SAFTU and formerly occupying the same role in COSATU before his expulsion from the latter federation, Ramaphosa's presidency is little more than a victory for the capitalist class: South Africans will now encounter a deepening neoliberalism, and a corruption-free neoliberalism is neoliberalism nonetheless. Hope, therefore, remains outside of the ANC, and in the formation and consolidation of a new, independent, left project, based perhaps, on what Mazibuko Jara has labelled a "post-ANC" Marxism.[24]

Since the early 1920s, the question of how South African socialists should relate to the ANC has been in dispute. While the stagist National Democratic Revolution (NDR) — which held that the ANC was the rightful leader of a nationalist first stage of revolution — won out in the years leading up to the transition, the evolving contours of class struggle in the post-apartheid era has weakened the equation tying support for the ANC together with the quest for socialism. In 2013, National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the largest trade union, was expelled from the tripartite alliance after refusing to campaign for the ruling party. In 2017, SAFTU was launched as an independent and non-aligned trade union federation in 2017 with NUMSA as its largest member.

The ANC, for its part, continues to conceive of itself in the terms of

23 See Zwelinzima Vavi, "Ramaphosa a deeply compromised capitalist billionaire — SAFTU," *Politicsweb*, December 31, 2017.

24 See Mazibuko Jara, "Critical Reflections on the Crisis and Limits of ANC 'Marxism" in ed. Michelle Williams and Vishwas Satgar, *Marxisms in the 21st Century: Crisis, Critique and Struggle* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2013), 261.

the first mover of the NDR.[25] Its Strategy and Tactics of 2017 maintains that the ANC is fighting for a "national democratic society."[26] The ANC is not, and never was, committed to socialism, although some of its members were and remain so.[27] Yet neither is it committed, at least formally, to neoliberalism. Instead, the ANC sets itself the goal of mediating what it acknowledges as an inevitable conflict between capital and labor in accordance with "national interests." In essence, a "national democratic society," is social democratic or even, as has been promoted by certain ANC members, a developmental state.

The "national interest" however, is not an abstract ideal without class content, nor is it conceived without class influence.[28] When adjudicating on what the ANC calls the "concrete goals of the NDR," the party is subject to the interests of historically white capital, an emergent black elite, and the working class. Maintaining the ANC as a hegemonic bloc or "broad church" will require a delicate balancing act.

THE RAMAPHOSA REGIME AND POTENTIAL REALIGNMENTS ON THE LEFT

What are we to expect, then, from the Ramaphosa regime? A month before his election to the ANC presidency, Ramaphosa released his

25 See African National Congress, "The ANC's Strategy and Tactics," Statement, 54th National Congress of the ANC, Johannesburg, December 16–17, 2017, http://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/the-ancs-strategy--tactics-2017.

26 For a discussion of the origins of the theory of National Democratic Revolution see Peter Hudson, "The Freedom Charter and The Theory of National Democratic Revolution," *Transformation* 1 (1986): 6–38, 13 –20. See also David Everatt, "Alliance Politics of a Special Type: The Roots of the ANC/SACP Alliance," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 1 (1992): 19-39 , 24.

27 As Thabo Mbeki put it: "The ANC is not a socialist party. It has never pretended to be one, it has never said it was, and it is not trying to be." (Mbeki quoted in John Saul, "Cry the Beloved Country: the post-apartheid denouement," *Review of African Political Economy* 89 (2001): 429–460, 445.

28 The problem with the ANC's view of a "national interest" floating above class conflicts in society mirrors the issues that plague the modern development-state paradigm. See Hugo Radice, "The Developmental State under Global Neoliberalism," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 6 (July 2018): 1153–1174.

"New Deal" economic policy vision. The document contains a now-compulsory reference to radical transformation and maintains that the latter will be achieved in the context of a "social compact" including business, government, labor, and civil society acting as equal participants in the quest to realize prosperity. The "New Deal" consists of a policy mix reflecting an uneasy balance of forces, from free education, to a commitment to a higher minimum wage and increases in infrastructure spending, toward more neoliberal commitments to "investor confidence," fiscal restraint, and corporatist public-private partnerships.[29]

The most significant policy announcement of the Ramaphosa era however has suggested a continuation of the ANC's post-apartheid commitment, at least in fiscal matters, to economic policy orthodoxy. The February Budget Speech remained true to the conservative fiscal stance dominant at the treasury since the 1990s. Although the budget makes provision for free education, it includes devastating cuts to public entities and infrastructure grants to provinces and municipalities. Where there are commitments to infrastructure spending, these largely remain tied to facilitating minerals extraction and South Africa's capital-intensive growth path. In tax policy, regressive excises like the value-added tax have been raised, while income-tax rates on the wealthy have been left alone.[30] South Africa's treasury, in short, while seemingly regaining on the struggle against "state capture," remains beholden to a neoliberal vision of trickle-down economics.[31]

29 Ramaphosa.org, "A New Deal for Jobs, Growth and Transformation," *Ramaphosa.org*, December 12, 2017.

30 For critical reflections on the February Budget see Patrick Bond, "A Case of Talk Left, Budget Right," *Mail and Guardian*, February 23, 2018. See also Thoko Madonko and Gilad Isaacs, "No, Minister. Increasing Vat was avoidable," *Mail and Guardian*, February 23, 2018 and Carol Paton, "The painfully high cost of providing free higher education," *Business Day*, March 27, 2018. Although most commentators on the Left have berated the VAT increase, an attempt to provide a progressive rationale for VAT increases is provided by Imraan Valodia and David Francis, "VAT zero-ratings finely balanced," *Business Day*, March 23, 2018.

31 Vishnu Padayachee, "Beyond a Treasury View of the World," Seminar, Southern Centre for Inequality Studies, Johannesburg, March 13, 2018.

Moving to another recent policy development, Ramaphosa himself was personally involved in negotiations at The National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), the platform by which government, labor, business, and community organizations negotiate, that have resulted in proposed amendments to the country's Labour Relations Act. Part of these proposals include a minimum wage of R20 per hour or R3,500 per month. While this is celebrated by COSATU as a step toward a living wage, SAFTU led a nationwide strike against the proposed amendments in April 2018, maintaining that they represented an attack on workers' power.

The hostilities exchanged between COSATU and SAFTU in the lead up and aftermath of the latter's strike action hint at the upcoming difficulties of maintaining a "social compact" in an environment where labor is split into two antagonistic groups. The ANC knows this, and during a COSATU May Day rally Ramaphosa and his deputy called for SAFTU and NUMSA to return to the alliance.[32] This is a highly unlikely prospect; more likely is SAFTU deepening its commitment to independence. And as the new federation and its allies become more militant, so must the ANC and Ramaphosa turn to COSATU to provide some shelter from the labor storm.

COSATU, however, cannot afford to be overly submissive to the ANC's demands lest it lose more of its members to its rival federation. Indeed, if the ruling party continues to flounder in the policy arena, if it fails to reconstitute the alliance on terms agreeable to COSATU and SACP, then it is hard to see how the tripartite alliance will survive in the context of a growing, independent, and increasingly militant left formation surrounding SAFTU. The SACP, for their part, have prepared themselves for this eventuality. At COSATU's May Day Rally, Blade Nzimande, the SACP general secretary and minister in Ramaphosa's cabinet, committed his party to work with other federations and engage in the formation of a broad "left front" in the country.[33]

Historically, the SACP's relationship with the ANC has gone through

32 See Rebecca Davies, "A tale of two labour federations," *The Daily Maverick*, May 2, 2018.

33 Ibid.

periods of tension. Yet their historic partnership was at a breaking point in the final years of the Zuma campaign. In 2017, the SACP went as far as to contest the Free State's Metsimaholo Municipality by-election alone, while calls from within the party to formally disband from the ANC reached fever pitch.[34] Although not explicitly endorsing such a position, the party's report from its fourteenth congress warned that "the ANC does not own the NDR and its leadership role is one that has to be earned in practice."[35]

At this stage, the Left outside of the alliance doesn't need to justify its loss of faith in the ANC. For many intellectuals, some of whom had been ANC or SACP members in the past, the ruling party has already betrayed the national liberation struggle for a project to secure the rise of a new national elite in a manner that Frantz Fanon described in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Although the neoliberal turn raised alarm bells, the Marikana massacre was the final straw. Indeed, the aftermath of Marikana witnessed a wave of protests and community unrest sweeping across the country. In the years after the massacre came the emergence of NUMSA and its United Front, the EFF, and finally, SAFTU. The student movement also used the massacre as a symbolic focal point. However, although all of the new left formations have displayed laudable militancy and enthusiasm, they have not coalesced into a coherent force. Each grouping, moreover, is plagued with significant weaknesses.

34 Young Communist League of South Africa (YCLSA) Chairperson maintained that "… the SACP must establish a working-class-led front and move rapidly to socialism." Yershan Pillay, "Seize the moment!," *Umsebenzi*, (July 2017), 10. http://www.sacp.org.za/pubs/umsebenzi2/2017/july.pdf.

35 See SACP, "The SACP and state and popular power: Resolution approved by the 14th National Congress," *Umsebenzi*, (October 2017), 14, http://www.sacp.org.za/pubs/umsebenzi2/2017/oct.pdf. While the ANC has stayed true to the formulation of its role as leader of "national democratic society," the party's main theorists, while keeping the language of NDR, have abandoned a mechanical stagism for a Gramscian "war of position" in their imaginary of the struggle for socialism. The latter is compatible with the contemporary call for a left front promoted by the party leadership. See Jeremy Cronin and Alex Mashilo," Decentering Race," in Edward Webster and Karin Pampallis (ed)., *The Unresolved National Question in South Africa: Left Thought Under Apartheid* (Johannesburg:Wits University Press), 38. A former SACP leader however, has gone so far as to blame the failure of the transition on the NDR itself and the lack of class content in the theory.

Both NUMSA and, as a consequence, SAFTU, suffer from organizational incapacity, with the former having a history of autocratic and bureaucratic tendencies. Like COSATU, NUMSA also embodies elements of business unionism.[36] NUMSA's overwhelming size and financial power will be difficult for smaller unions within SAFTU to negotiate. Ideological differences also need to be negotiated.[37] Though their recent strike indicates an impressive following, concerted effort will be required to maintain high levels of worker mobilization, particularly in the context of deepening deindustrialization in the economy.

The EFF, while possessing a wide following in township and working-class communities, are, as mentioned, an enigmatic entity. Some commentators are quick to label the party fascist.[38] They point to its hypermasculine style, penchant for sloganeering and posturing, and incessant race-baiting.[39] The EFF are yet to define a coherent ideological stance, articulating a vague Marxism-Leninism-Fanonism while trying to house those sympathetic to the Freedom Charter, Black Consciousness, and Africanism under the same roof.

A similar call for caution applies for assessing the potentials of the student movement. Since #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall began in 2015, the student movement has achieved many remarkable victories. It reignited workers' struggle on the universities, collaborating with university staff in a number of successful #Endoutsourcing campaigns.[40] It also forced through important discussions about alienation

36 Ashman, Levenson, and Ngwane, "South Africa's ANC."

37 NUMSA still holds onto the imaginary of the NDR, while other unions are more aligned to workerist traditions. Ashman et al, "South Africa's ANC."

38 While Ashman, Levenson, and Ngwane dismiss that proposition, they do not adequately explain why we should follow them in "*resolutely*" rejecting the claim. Ibid.

39 See for example Vishwas Satgar, "The EFF's wrecking ball politics is fascist rather than left," *Mail and Guardian*, April 5, 2017. Ismail Lagardien, "Difficult but not impossible to see creeping fascism in the EFF," The *Daily Maverick*, February 23, 2018, and Adam Habib, "Is Ramaphosa's ANC managing the challenge from the EFF," The *Daily Maverick*, March 12, 2018.

40 See Vishwas Satgar, "Bringing Class back in: Against outsourcing during #FeesMustFall at WITS" in ed. Susan Booysen, *Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2016), 214–234.

and discrimination that continue to plague South Africa's higher education landscape and society under the banner of "decolonization."[41] However, the student movement seems to have been a victim of the very vacuum that it had rightly risen up to question. The neoliberalization of South African universities has hollowed out spaces for critical thinking about social emancipation, as universities becoming sites of elite formation and vehicles for the production of "excellence sheep."[42] With few practical links to off-campus struggle and little knowledge of the history of nuanced race-class debates, committed and militant students have suffered from significant ideological weaknesses and the movements have now all but deserted the scene.[43]

CURRENT STRUGGLES

Whether or not the Left is able to cohere into a unified and influential bloc at the current conjuncture remains an open question. Since

41 Anye Nyamnjoh, "The Phenomenology of Rhodes Must Fall: Student Activism and the Experience of Alienation at the University of Cape Town," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 39, no. 1, (May 2017): 256–277.

42 See Andrew Nash, "Excellence in Higher Education: is there really no alternative" in South African Council on Higher Education, *The Aims of Higher Education* (Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2013), 42–62. See also Michael Nassen Smith, Manapo Mokose, Alexander Pennington, and Zimpande Kawanu, "Neoliberalism and the Crisis in Higher Education in South Africa," *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy* 64, (1st Quarter, 2017): 28–32.

43 Ashman, Levenson, and Ngwane, "South Africa's ANC." Instead of locating their thinking in the rich history of South African political thought, an influential portion of students mimicked identitarian discourses and forms of political praxis popular at universities in the Global North today, and repackaged them for a South African context (See Hussein Badat, "Wokeness and the professional outrage machine," *AfricaIsaCountry*, April 3, 2018). While some student groups turned to "black radical" literature, their reading was often uncritical and, at times, bottomed out in conservative interpretations of both Biko and Fanon, two figures who have become the icons of "decolonization" (See for example Xolela Mangcu, "Decolonisation that assaults African values not worth its salt," *IOL*, March 19, 2017.) In addition, on campus, the students have been fed a steady diet of postcolonial and decolonial thought whose emphasis on "social difference" and celebration of "lived experience" has also contributed to an incapacity of students to locate their struggle in wider terms. (See for example Claire Lester, Carilee Osborne, and Michael Nassen Smith, "Falling Rainbows: Anatomy of a False Choice," *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy* 64, [March 2017]: 36–38.)

Ramaphosa entered into office, Vavi and NUMSA have called for the establishment of a Workers' Party that would unite all left political formations and civil society formations in the country.[44] Such a party may be strengthened by a potential split in the tripartite alliance. Yet even if the latter were to occur, old antagonisms between the SACP, COSATU, and those in independent left formations are bound to complicate the difficulties already faced within SAFTU discussed above.

In the short term, the only thing that can guide all left formations in the country is a commitment to achieving concrete gains through concerted struggle. On the immediate horizon looms the unsettled amendments to the Labour Relations Act, amendments to the controversial Mining Charter, the struggle to ensure reform of state-owned enterprises does not lead to privatization or further corporatization, and land reform. A sustained exploration of avenues for struggle in each of these arenas and beyond is outside the scope of this essay. It can only be suggested here that emphasis must surely be made on halting deindustrialization, stressing the urgency of implementing a "just transition" to a climate-friendly economy, and the promotion of workers' control over mere demographic changes to ownership.

On the final point, theoretical and practical tools are needed to stem the tide of the racial chauvinism and narrow nationalism threatening to engulf national discourse in the country. The emergent black elite, some of whom are beneficiaries of the state's Black Economic Empowerment initiative, have mobilized race-reductive ideological support for a vision of RET that stresses diversity of business ownership as the priority of a project to "deracialize" capitalism.[45] In such a context, it is crucial for the Left to embrace what Zimitri Erasmus has helpfully

44 NUMSA's May Day Statement concurred and committed the union to launching a "socialist revolutionary party" in 2018. Staff Reporter, "Debate about forming a Workers Party cannot be postponed: Vavi," *The Sowetan,* February 25, 2018. See also NUMSA, "Socialist Revolutionary party to be launched this year — NUMSA May Day Statement," *Politicsweb,* May 1, 2018.

45 For an extended discussion of the failures of race-based redress in post-apartheid South see Gerhard Mare, *Declassified: Moving Beyond the Dead End of Race in South Africa* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2014), 98–124.

called an "anti-colonial nonracialism," distinct from both liberal nonracialism, and the multiracialism of the "rainbow nation." This would also require rejecting Marxist-based justifications for continued support for a race-based "patriotic bourgeoisie."[46]

CONCLUSION

Given the recent setbacks experienced by the main opposition parties, Ramaphosa has a chance to consolidate the ANC's electoral power — if he can tend to the growing rot within the party. Should he fail to build his "social compact" on terms favorable to the alliance partners, a historical split in the latter will be inevitable — if not in the medium term then in the longer term as COSATU and the SACP face increasing pressure from a frustrated rank and file. Such a split will entail a substantial reworking of practical matters, but also of deeply held ideological convictions and histories; this will be the case for the ruling party as much as for the SACP and COSATU. The independent left's promise of forming a workers' party might be strengthened if this were to occur, yet there will be difficulties in building coherence and unity amidst deep ideological and organizational differences and weaknesses. The EFF, while militant, is wracked with serious flaws.

Ultimately, although it is weak and fractured at present, growing disillusionment and frustration with the declining conditions of the working class and poor in the country will open up the space for the Left to grow and deepen its roots in popular struggles. If the latter fails however, Ramaphosa's years in the presidency will mean a deepening of the current crisis of neoliberalism in South Africa and the consolidation of elite power, in both black and white.

46 For a recent attempt to defend the concept of a patriotic bourgeoisie see Christopher Malikane, "Concerning the Current Situation," *Khanya Journal*, April 7, 2017.

This essay examines Oliver Lovesey's *Postcolonial George Eliot*. In question is the effectiveness of its method of "contrapuntal reading" advocated by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*. Deploying this method, Lovesey tries to claim Eliot to the discourse of empire, despite the absence in her work of any overt references to British imperialism. In so doing, Lovesey elevates empire to an unsustainable position.

A CONTRAPUNTAL ELIOT

ARUNA KRISHNAMURTHY

Recent critiques of postcolonial studies have been shaped around two lines of inquiry: a consideration of its origins and ascent within the academy, and the analysis and critique of its substantive contributions. While the prestige of postcolonial studies is often credited to Edward Said for his monumental work, *Orientalism*, with a runner's up prize for Gayatri Spivak, its popularity owes just as much to the social context as it does to the talents of its progenitors. As Arif Dirlik, Aijaz Ahmad, and others have pointed out, postcolonial studies' ascent came through the displacement of Marxist theory, hitherto the dominant intellectual force on the Left. This, in turn, was the intellectual reflection of a political conjuncture — the dramatic defeats of the global left after the 1970s, and the retreat of radicals into the university. On the back of these defeats, social theory in the 1980s swapped a materialist emphasis on class analysis for the inflation of culture in human affairs. Under the tutelage of a few savvy Third World intellectuals in the Global North, this reached the shores of colonial studies as well. A new postcolonial discourse thus took hold.

Over the past generation or so, the field has expanded by claiming an ever-increasing part of the intellectual universe into its ambit, sometimes as an extension of its inner self, and in other instances as parts of its pre-history of radicalism. Given this ironically imperial ambition, what Arif Dirlik describes as "a new orthodoxy in cultural criticism and academic programs,"[1] it is not altogether surprising to find its advocates trying to hitch canonical figures of nineteenth-century literature to the postcolonial wagon. It is largely within this scholarly trend that Oliver Lovesey's *Postcolonial George Eliot* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017) must be located.

At first glance, a postcolonial *analysis of* George Eliot seems plausible, given that the late nineteenth century was a period of consolidation of the British empire, with the transfer of power in India from the East India Company to the British crown in 1858, and the declaration of Victoria as the Empress of India (the empire's "jewel in the crown") in 1876. As Lovesey points outs, these dates mirror almost exactly the period of Eliot's literary corpus: her first fiction, "The Sad Fortunes of the Revered Amos Barton," was published in 1857, and her last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, in 1876. But, as Lovesey himself acknowledges, and Nancy Henry has shown before him, Eliot's writings never engage directly with the colonial project.[2] She never traveled outside Europe herself, and though she did have some minor personal linkages to empire, those were mostly through her partner, G. H. Lewes. She also dabbled in high-yield colonial stocks, and, like other contemporaries, she and Lewes were directly involved in shaping the colonial careers of the latter's sons in South Africa. But while these signal her engagement with the fact of empire, do they also indicate that empire is a useful prism through which to read her literary production? One may well ask, how and why does Eliot get

1 Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism" *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 340.

2 Nancy Henry, "George Eliot and the Colonies," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29, no. 2 (2001): 413-433.

reclaimed within a postcolonial framework, and what is the value of establishing her credentials in that special way?

Lovesey makes his case by drawing on Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, in method as also in motivation. It was in this work that Said insisted on the centrality of imperialist thought in much of the canon, which literary scholars had thus far ignored. Said's critique pertains especially to works from the nineteenth century. Unlike eighteenth- or twentieth-century novels, which were often very openly embedded within an imperial worldview, canonical novels of the mid to late nineteenth century, such as Austen's and Thackeray's, have evoked mostly metropolitan questions of class, gender, and other domestic hierarchies. Though the awareness of overseas domination in these works is tangential at best, rereading them within a postcolonial framework enables Said to raise important questions about their cultural connections with imperialism, and thus to open them to entirely new lines of criticism. In the process of recruiting these texts to his project, what Said identifies as political, as against curricular, is a crucial point that has shaped the subsequent development of postcolonial studies.

But to insert colonial themes into these canonical works isn't always simple; Said acknowledges that "most of the great nineteenth-century realistic novels are less assertive about colonial rule and possessions."[3] His solution is to introduce the idea of a "contrapuntal reading," in which he relies on narrative authority and geographical location to, in Nancy Henry's description, "draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented" in the novel.[4] So, in his treatment of Jane Austen, instead of blaming her for "being white, privileged, insensitive, complicit," etc., a contrapuntal reading traces the colonial connection of *Mansfield Park* by

3 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Knopf: New York, 1993), 64.

4 Nancy Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 110.

establishing its "complementarity and interdependence" [5] with more visible elements in the novel — thus elevating to center stage an apparently marginal element of the narrative. It is not the colonizer — the "seeing man," as Mary Louise Pratt describes him[6] — or the native, or even the physical space of the colonies that constitutes the colonial experience, since all of them are largely absent in the novel. Rather, Said uses the fate and ideology of its very provincial heroine, Fanny Price, as his lynchpin. Thus, Said is able to build on just a handful of references to Antigua, and on Fanny's sense of geography as she moves between aristocratic Mansfield Park and lowbrow Portsmouth, alongside her ideological association with the aristocratic colonizer Sir Thomas Bertram, to conclude that "[n]ovelists aligned the holding of power and privilege abroad with comparable activities at home."[7]

The overarching claim of *Postcolonial George Eliot* is that Eliot's critique of English prejudices towards cultural others in the English countryside displays her anti-imperialist mindset. And yet, as a mid-Victorian novelist writing about rural communities for an urban middle-class British readership, Eliot has always attracted a political reading of her placement vis-à-vis her community. Most famously, Raymond Williams has cast Eliot as a spokesperson for the rural working classes who uses the genre of nineteenth-century realist novel to construct a "knowable community."[8] As an insider, Eliot is able to advance a nuanced perspective on the rural community, yet one that is limited by her own middle-class sensibilities, which for Williams places severe restrictions on her role as an organic intellectual.

Transforming the provincial Eliot into the cosmopolitan required by postcolonial theory necessitates a special kind of reading, so that all references to social inequities and forms of power become metaphors

5 Said, 96.

6 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Routledge: London, 1992).

7 Said, 76.

8 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (OUP: London, 1973).

for imperialism, connecting home and colony in Said-ian manner. This is Lovesey's mobilization of his own "contrapuntal" reading, and it congeals in a number of distinct ways. In one instance, the insider-outsider status of the narrator, which is, in fact, a staple of the novel genre, is grafted onto nineteenth-century anthropological discourse in *Adam Bede* and *Scenes of Clerical Life*. In another example, Eliot's literary aesthetics and provincial characters, plots, and settings are filtered through a range of ancillary discourses calculated to show that she has an empathy for the "other" whose presence can be recorded through various types of absences in her novel, *Felix Holt*. Further, the ameliorative fervor of the provincial heroine in *Middlemarch*, commonly examined within the "woman question" of the nineteenth century, stands in for imperialist zeal for imagined communities in colonial spaces.

There is no doubt that Lovesey brings an immense range of erudition and painstaking attention to detail to reconstruct what others may have consigned to a footnote or ignored altogether. The very purpose of his analysis is to elevate the footnote to a place of significance in the main narrative and, in a "contrapuntal" way, allow its influence to generate a number of possible readings. But the result is disappointing. For the most part, these alternative readings rest on very thin argument and are held together by a gossamer-thin web of references. The available textual evidence for reconstructing a postcolonial Eliot is rather scarce, which is why the contrapuntal reading is required in the first place. But Lovesey burdens it with a weight that even this method cannot bear, relying on an ever-expanding set of references and allusions, often at the cost of a unifying perspective. This only highlights the pitfalls of Saidian readings if pushed beyond a point, as Nancy Henry ably describes it: "Straining to see what is invisible, or 'ideologically represented' – as if the characters were living people whose unrepresented activities could be known – critics have been blinded to the visible."[9]

9 Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire*, 113.

By contrast, in Williams's class analysis, Eliot's representation of provincial England in the form of the "knowable community" is arrived at through a range of historical, biographical, and cultural discourses in which writers like Austen and Eliot were immersed, whose organic value is underscored by Williams's own background and his sensitivity to authentic cultural representation. In creating the cosmopolitan Eliot, such grounded considerations are exchanged for a constellation-like or rhizomatic, free-ranging analysis, where potential connections to imperialism rely, in the end, on a dense network of conjectures, adorned in postcolonial rhetoric, but with only the flimsiest of evidence in train.

Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the chapter entitled, "George Eliot and Victorian Islamophobia." Here, Lovesey examines the novel *Felix Holt* by raising a question about one of its central characters — Harold Transome — who returns to his rural estate in England after amassing wealth for fifteen years in Turkey. The question of "How many wives had Harold Transome?" is a rhetorical one; at the literal level of the plot, the answer is "none," as his Greek, presumably (though not confirmed) Muslim wife or concubine is dead before he leaves for England. For Lovesey, the absence of the wife from the plot, or lack of details regarding Transome's activities in the Orient, far from disabling an orientalist reading of the novel, paradoxically allow the reader to focus on the figure of the colonizer without the distraction of dealing with the colony itself. Transome's wife, like Islam in the novel, "is an absent presence,"[10] and these absences are partly explained as Eliot's fastidiousness about using only firsthand knowledge derived through travel and experience to shape her fiction. Like Austen and Brontë, Eliot never left the shores of Europe, but unlike Bronte, who created the infamous Bertha Mason based out of secondary sources, Eliot's Orient is designed to focus "on a framework of western perceptions, expectations, and stereotypes."[11]

10 Oliver Lovesey, *Postcolonial George Eliot*, 107.

11 Lovesey, 110.

Lovesey overlays the local history of the novel, which is centered around local working-class upheavals in the English countryside during the First Reform Act of 1832, with the history of the 1830s anti-colonial war of independence by the Greeks against the Ottoman Empire. Connecting the two histories allows Lovesey to assert (but not substantiate) a "contrapuntal" point for Eliot, namely, that she foregrounds homespun corruption in the novel as a way to challenge Islamophobic stereotypes about the Orient. But in "fleshing out" the absent Mrs Transome's identity and her backstory through nineteenth-century literary references, Lovesey goes on a speculative quest through close readings where, in the end, everything can be guessed, but nothing affirmed, about her identity. Was Transome in a homoerotic relationship with his oriental manservant? Was his oriental son a tyrannical despot stand-in for his oriental mother? Could Mrs Transome have been one the many Muslim slave women that fled to the Ottoman Empire during the Ottoman–Greek war of the 1830s? Lovesey flies these multiple kites simultaneously, but what is lost in this speculative jaunt is any certainty about Eliot's attitude towards the hapless Mrs Transome — she was (like Bertha Mason) clearly a foil for the more argumentative and intellectual Western woman; in depending on the existing stereotypes of the Greek slave, was Eliot empathetic to her plight, or was she demonstrating Harold's debasement? Then again, a contrapuntal approach doesn't demand such ideological certainties of the writer, as they are but a series of assertions rather than sustained analysis with concrete textual evidence.

In a chapter titled "Decolonizing Victorian Anthropology," the central question for us is, does Eliot's possible awareness of anthropology's "participant-observer convention" enable her to take a position about empire through the medium of fiction? Eliot's early fiction, "Scenes from a Clerical Life," and her first novel, *Adam Bede*, mostly read for their middle-class attitudes towards rural community in an industrialized society (within an established literary tradition of such representations) do not offer remarkable or sustained connections to

the discourse of empire. "Scenes from Clerical Life" has a sprinkle of allusions to other geographies and cultures, very much within the staple stereotypes of nineteenth-century "outsiders": an Italian woman, Caterina, who Lovesey says, "is less a heroine than a melodramatic cipher,"[12] and a couple of references to foreign cultures — third-century Egyptian hermits, North American indigenous peoples, and the life in the colony of Society islands — as metaphors more to delineate the provincial mindset of English characters. Their combined ideological effect, traced through Thomas Carlyle and Barbara Bodichon's travel writing, is again, not entirely determinable; Eliot's cosmopolitanism, and equally Lovesey's analysis, in these examples is essentially confined to "an aspiration to a distanced view," to use Amanda Anderson's words.[13]

Beyond cataloging the presence of others, the main thrust of the analysis situates Eliot's domestic fiction within the discipline of Victorian anthropology that she had access to, given her connection with Lewes, her interest in scientific discourse of her age, and fascination with Rousseau's self-fashioning commitment to social justice and cosmopolitan interest in foreign societies. Lovesey foregrounds the centrality of novel reading in the lives of anthropologists such as Malinowski and Andre Gide, and the "literary" qualities of the anthropological discourse — "framing narratives, accessing memory and imagination, and constructing a distinctive, authoritative voice" — to make a case for considering Eliot's fiction as a type of anthropological or ethnographical discourse.[14] The point of this connection lies in the origin of anthropology as a discipline within imperialism, which allows Lovesey to recast Eliot's domestic fiction about clerical life and rural communities as literature of empire, "that mimics the colonial encounter." [15] Seen

12 Lovesey, 73.

13 Quoted in Tanya Agathocleous and Jason R. Rudy, "Victorian Cosmopolotanisms: Introduction," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 38, no. 2 (2010): 391.

14 Lovesey, 60.

15 Lovesey, 51.

through this lens, *Adam Bede* is a "colonial allegory advocating a style of domestic colonialism."[16] What this amounts to is a repositioning of the bourgeois narrator of Williams's analysis, a Janus-like figure who renders the lowbrow rural community as at once intimately knowable but also at a linguistic distance from the urban reader. Within a lexicon of anthropology, "as a type of native informant," the *cosmopolitan* narrator radically chastises the rural community for their prejudice towards cultural others.

But at what point does the domestic narrator transform into the colonial one? Eliot may be fully immersed in the anthropological reading of her times, but the long literary trajectory of rural representation by middle-class narrators such as John Thelwall, William Cobbett, and others, many of whom are analyzed by Williams, showcases a similar combination of empathy, distance, reprimand, intimacy, and narrative failure that Lovesey identifies with the anthropological narrative. Furthermore, within the novel's epistemology of realism, stretching back to the late seventeenth century, narrators and fictional characters always operate as "particular people in particular circumstances" (in Ian Watt's words).[17] That imperialism is an extension of the self-same drive for profit as is characteristic of the bourgeois ethos is too well established a fact to justify the turn toward anthropology for analysis.

The same contrapuntal strategy governs Lovesey's analysis of *Middlemarch*. The smorgasbord of possibilities for a postcolonial reading of the voluminous novel loaded with many provincial details but little reference to Britain's colonial rule stretches to include everything from domestic "colonial" projects to "doomed" oriental scholarship. Two of the main characters — Lydgate and Dorothea — embody utopian longings for an ideal community that Lovesey links with the colonizer's paternalism toward the colony, and Eliot's radical critique of empire is

16 Lovesey, 52.

17 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), 15.

indirectly articulated in their failure to achieve their goals. Dorothea's marriage to Will Ladislaw, whose Polish and Jewish ancestry mark him as a documented "other" in *Middlemarch*, highlights the necessity of reform in the provinces, which is a big part of the novel's purpose.

But it is the figure of the "resident armchair orientalist," Casaubon, that is most relevant for an appraisal of Lovesey's postcolonial reading. Casaubon's unfinished work, "The Key to all Mythologies," aims to unite all the disparate mythological traditions of the world within a Christian origin, but his project fails due to his inability to master the material and organize it. "The Key to All Mythologies" is, as Lovesey says, "a self-consciously preposterous title, implying in its grandiosity a certain skepticism about the overarching ambition of Eurocentric research in anthropology, mythography and orientalism."[18] Coupled with this is Casaubon's "adherence to preserving the material privileges of the status quo and his reactionary politics."[19] But even as Casaubon is chastised for his Eurocentric imperialist project of inquiring into other cultures and their narratives to affirm his own, in his inability to gain control over what Lovesey calls, the "hydra concept" of orientalism, "a domain without limits," and his canny avoidance of what may be unsuited to his class interests, he begins to embody many of the problems of contemporary postcolonial criticism.[20]

What Lovesey finds problematic in Casaubon — "trac[ing] analogies or homologies between heterogenous sources in his quest for a single origin"[21] — an enthusiasm, according to Lewes, to which "oriental scholars" are prone, in fact forms the warp and woof *Postcolonial George Eliot* as well. As deployed by Lovesey, postcolonial studies becomes an all-encompassing, hydra-like concept, associated with any instance of inequality or oppression, and hence losing any connection to location, context, and time. As Nancy Henry says, such

18 Lovesey, 186.

19 Lovesey, 192.

20 Lovesey, 186.

21 Lovesey, 186.

a reading practice is based on asserting that "Imperialism is simply bad, and all forms of power – psychological, financial, physical – may be explained by it."[22]

Casaubon received a harsh judgment from Eliot: where his self-deluded quest is revealed as a derivative discourse that is cut off from real life, Eliot affirms that "genius … is in a power to make or do, not anything in general, but something in particular."[23] Perhaps there is a lesson for the postcolonial critics here.

22 Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire*, 122.

23 Quoted in Lovesey, 185.

NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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