

NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO TRUMPION MOTION

Posts in this series; some of the terms I use are described more fully in these posts.

Trumpian Motion

Negative Responses to Trumpian Motion

Economic Elites Drive Trumpian Motion

Beneficiaries of Trumpian Motion

Notes on Trumpian Motion Series

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I am really bothered by Trumpian Motion and I know other people are too. It seems to me that the reason for this is that the election and the Republican wreckage of government challenge my basic assumptions about my fellow citizens and about the way the country works. In this post I follow Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus as explained by David Swartz in *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* to see what it suggests about me and by extension maybe others. There's a discussion of habitus here, which I would change in several ways, though not in the description of habitus itself. Here's the Wikipedia entry.

In short, habitus is a deeply embedded mental structure informs us about our culture, actions that are possible for us given our place in the culture, and the likely outcome of actions we could take. It guides our understanding of social interactions more generally. Habitus is learned from experience, starting with our first days, with the social and work worlds we encounter. Habitus controls our understanding of what is possible for us given our social class.

Bourdieu thinks that habitus is fairly similar across class and class fractions. He thinks of classes as groups with similar levels of economic, cultural, social and other forms of capital. The class fractions vary by the field in which people primarily operate, and by the amounts of each form of capital each person has.

This provides a way to understand society as a loosely grouped sets of people who share common dispositions and understandings.

Bourdieu uses sophisticated survey methods to learn about and describe habitus, class, and other mediating concepts. I don't have those tools or the ability to use them. Habitus in particular is deeply embedded and may not even be directly ascertainable by introspection, but I'm going to make an effort. What follows is my best guess at elements of my habitus exposed by my reactions to Trumpian Motion.

I know I have deeply rooted expectations about the way society works. For example, when looking at legal problems, I expect the solutions to make sense in terms of what I know about similar situations and what people engaged in the specific field in question would expect. I was just as shocked to win a case I thought I would lose as I was to lose one I thought I should win.

I have a general understanding of the ideals of the United States, and I expect that the nation will move towards those ideals. Underlying this part of my habitus is the assumption that the goal of society is to enable us to enjoy our lives, doing things that are fun, things that are challenging. That includes meeting my family obligations, doing my job, hanging out with other people who like to do the same things I do and are interested in the same kinds of things I am interested in.

I also see in myself a general liking for other people, and a general sense that most people are decent and share a general good will. I expect people to share acceptance of the ideas and values of the Enlightenment.

Finally, I have a general understanding of the way government works, and the role it plays in my life, including such basic things as social programs, regulatory activities, security issues and so on. Among those was the level of day-to-day intrusion into my life. There were plenty of

days when I never thought about politics or policy or government, they just worked in the background, collecting and organizing information about the economy and society, monitoring the air and water, general policing, watching out for diseases, doing basic research and so on.

I recognize that these dispositions are a mark of privilege, and that I have a responsibility to move things that way, but I thought that there was general agreement on these principles, even if conservatives wanted to move more slowly, and I mostly thought I was doing enough, or at least as much as could be expected of me consistent with meeting personal obligations and exercising my talents.

Given this habitus, it's not surprising that the election of Trump was a shock. It's also not a surprise that I am shocked and a bit frightened to watch these vandals tear up the government, threaten war, insult other countries and their citizens, hand out money to the filthy rich at the expense of everyone else, acting like monkeys flinging poop. It's disturbing. It shakes the very foundation of my expectations and dispositions.

I am forced to confront a basic failure of my habitus. A huge number of people approve of the job Trump doing, including 90% of Republicans. This is incomprehensible in the context of my habitus. These are not people of good will and decency. They are ugly and hateful. They do not share my goals for society. They think they are superior and deserve everything and that millions of others are worthless and deserve nothing except misery.

And most of all, I hate their stupid racket. I read junk like this fool preacher who says there is no flu epidemic because Jesus is the flu shot. I read about this bozo who thinks the flu shot causes Alzheimer's and that the flu is a government plot for population control. The true believers are unable to see something as obvious as that Trump is a racist pig.

That last link is to a Roger Cohen column in the New York Times.

Still, I respect Kennedy. He's served his country. He's a patriot. He's no "deplorable." He's smart. The Democratic Party should listen to him, or risk losing in 2020.

That's the way I used to think, and it's obviously wrong. I'd guess that Cohen's habitus is not that different from mine. Habitus is hard to change, and Cohen hasn't succeeded in taking the first step, which is to realize that it isn't working. Neither have the other centrist Democrats. I haven't figured out how I need to change either, but I know I need to, and I know it doesn't have anything to do with listening to Trump supporters or being battered by Trumpian motion.