

ECONOMIC ELITES DRIVE 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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The driving force behind Trumpian Motion is the economically dominant class. In this post I look for an explanation, using the framework provided by Pierre Bourdieu as described in David Swartz' book *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*.

Bourdieu studies the way social classes reproduce themselves so that the dominated class accepts domination as a fair outcome based on their lack of personal merit;, and the dominant class sees its power as natural and not the result of their birth, selection and grooming. A good example of the latter is that the academically marginal at best W. Bush got into Yale.

Bourdieu describes several kinds of capital, economic, social, cultural, religious and others. The most important is economic capital, and cultural capital is second. Cultural capital is a form of power based on "... verbal facility, general cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, information about the school system, and educational credentials... P. 75.

Swartz offers this summary of Bourdieu's thinking:

Bourdieu considers conflict to be the fundamental dynamic of all social life. At the heart of all social arrangements is the struggle for power. One of Bourdieu's key claims is that this

struggle is carried out over symbolic as well as material resources. Moreover, it is Bourdieu's fundamental claim that cultural resources, such as education credentials, have come to function as a kind of capital, and thereby have become a new and distinct source of differentiation in modern societies. P. 136.

The struggles Bourdieu discusses take place in fields. Fields are arenas governed by formal and informal rules of struggle. The field of power has fewer and less clear rules, but it is the most important. P.138. Bourdieu thinks economic capital is engaged in a struggle with cultural capital for domination in the field of power. This field operates as a source of differentiation and ranking in all fields, including political power.

Domination arises from power. The possessors of cultural power (the terms capital and power mean the same thing) have the ability to be dominant in some areas. Thus, artists, physical scientists, social scientists, museum curators, movie-makers, writers, teachers and others possess cultural power. Cultural power includes symbolic power, which controls the way people understand and respond to the social world. Symbolic power manifests itself in all areas of our social lives. I'll use two examples: our concepts of justice and fairness; and our understanding of the physical universe.

The dominant culture in this country has changed over the last 50 years in the areas of justice and fairness. For example, when Social Security passed, it was designed to give as little as possible to African-Americans, and that was necessary to gain support from Southern Democratic party legislators. That wouldn't have happened a few years ago (I'm less sure about today). The same thing is true of other forms of discrimination. So, that's one expression of cultural symbolic power.

The second example of cultural power arises from the hard sciences and technology. Our understanding of the physical universe has increased dramatically, giving rise to huge fortunes and at the same time showing the dangers of the new understandings.

In the US, the cultural elites (those with a lot of cultural power) quit struggling with the economic elites (those with financial assets) and accepted the domination of capitalism. The economic elites largely quit struggling with the cultural elites over almost all matters of justice and fairness, including racism, sexism, and LGBTQ issues.

Economic elites have a mixed record with physical scientists and technology. In general they support it, but in specific instances they attack. For example, we knew from the 1920s on that leaded gasoline was dangerous. The history of getting lead out of gasoline is ugly, as the petroleum and auto industries lied and denied that danger. That opposition was controlled. Industry claimed to use science in its defense, and pretended to rely on their own fraudulent studies and false assertions about defects in opposition studies.

As our knowledge grew and time passed, there were more and more examples of the free market poisoning the planet and building unsafe products and then lying and denying to cover it up. Just look at seat belts, the Ford Pinto, smog, water pollution, tobacco, other carcinogens, estrogen toxicity, and global warming. The scientists and technicians who study these things have been shouting into the wind about all of them, but industrial giants and their captive organizations fight back with increasing shrillness and personal attacks. With global warming, the attacks have broadened out because the science is so widespread across disciplines, and it now seems that the economic elites don't care if they wreck the scientific community and discredit scientific methodology.

These attacks would not happen without the

implicit assent of the economic elites.

Bourdieu says that economic power requires some other justification for its legitimacy. P. 91. In the Middle Ages that justification came from religion, which linked Monarchs and the aristocracy to divine will. Today it comes from cultural power, and from symbolic power. Or at least, it did before the rise of neoliberalism, a creation of the cultural elites in the field of economics. They purport to have a complete grasp of human nature. They tell the broad public that the market is wonderful and will make everything great. Meanwhile, economists whisper in the ears of the economic elite that they are the natural leaders blessed by the Market; it's a modern version of Calvinism. Economic elites no longer need the cultural elites to provide legitimation, because they are selected by the supreme computer. And so they feel free to attack the holders of cultural capital, to make them the enemy.

And what's the goal of the rich? As we learn from James Winters and Benjamin Page, the rich have three goals in common:

1. Protecting and preserving wealth
2. Insuring the unrestricted use of wealth
3. Acquiring more wealth.

They don't want any interference from anyone, especially the 99%. I'd like to think that there are responsible rich people, but I can't think of a single example of any of the .01% effectively objecting to any effort of their peers to benefit themselves or the entire group of rich people.

The truce is dead. The economic elites are attacking the cultural elites. The cultural elites ignored the rise of the rich too long, and now lack the capacity to fight back effectively. And that's why we are suffering from Trumpian Motion. It hides the gluttonous rich behind a wall of noise and fear.