

NOTES ON TRUMPIAN MOTION SERIES

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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1. I try to keep these posts to a reasonable length, which means leaving out a lot, especially a lot of supporting history. I appreciate the additional history provided by several commenters, including especially EarlOfHuntington in several of these posts.

2. One of the issues in this post is the conflict between cultural capital and religious capital. This is not a struggle over money. Instead, using Bourdieu's terms, the struggle is for symbolic power, the power to define the way we understand ourselves, our society, and the world we live in. We shouldn't assume that either the holders of cultural power or the holders of religious capital are trying to get rich from the struggle. It's perfectly possible that both groups are acting in good faith.

This struggle is similar to the struggle between neoliberal and Keynesian economists, as I describe here. Most of us want to be right and to make a contribution to society. I might even reluctantly agree that Milton Friedman was acting in good faith. Whatever the motives of the teachers, most students are motivated by a desire to succeed in their chosen profession, and not by lust for money. In the same way, the religious right is no doubt convinced it is acting in the name of the Almighty, trying to bring light to the gentiles, no matter what might have motivated Billy Sunday or Aimee Semple McPherson or their ilk. That's not to say

there aren't plenty of money-grubbing charlatans in both groups.

Bourdieu says that the various forms of capital can be exchanged for each other. Cultural power can be used to acquire economic power, and to a lesser extent, vice versa. Religious capital can be exchanged for economic capital as well. In the near term, however, they exist for their own sake. In the intermediate term, there is a lot of exploitation of symbolic power for money. That's why we have Statutes of Mortmain.

3. The important issue addressed in this series is power. For that reason, I avoid discussion of political parties. All nations, not just the US, are governed by the rich directly or indirectly. In the US, the elites have decided to do so explicitly. In state after state we see billionaires and centi-millionaires running for high office with the sanction of whichever party they choose to endow. The billionaire class publicly states its plans to purchase offices.

I say in the first post in this series that underlying Trumpian Motion is an ideology, neoliberalism. Another reason to leave out political parties is that both parties share that ideology, though they express it differently.

Neoliberalism might be understood as a symbolic structure, but if so, it is imposed on us by the economic elites through what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence. There is nothing organic about neoliberalism. It was constructed to be a bulwark against socialism and communism, and to enhance the power of the economic elites. See Philip Mirowski's book *Never Let A Serious Crisis Go To Waste*. In contrast, the symbolic structures generated by the cultural elites and by religion both directly connect to human nature. The former arises out of curiosity and reasoning. The latter arises from human spirituality. They differ in many ways, but they both meet real human needs and real human potential.

I think neoliberalism is an ideology and nothing more. It's a tool used by economic elites to gain and preserve their power and keep the rest of the citizenry in their place.

4. I talk about the truce between economic capital and cultural capital throughout the series, and I say that the economic elites have ended the truce. Bourdieu attributes the power of the cultural elites to their ability to reproduce their class without interference. A big part of the truce was to permit this to continue. But that's over now to a large extent.

There is plenty of evidence of this every day in the media. The economic elites use their power to defund state governments, forcing them to slice education funding. Among other things, the increased tuition led colleges and universities to direct curricula away from the humanities and even from basic science into technology that can produce immediate returns to capital. Tenured positions are becoming rarer, as is steady employment. Badly paid and treated adjuncts comprise more than half of university teachers. Here's a story in the New York Times about how rich conservatives in Arizona are funding a program in Arizona:

In Arizona, the Legislature has taken a direct role, fostering academic programs directly from the state budget and sidestepping the usual arrangement in which universities decide how to spend the money. Lawmakers are bankrolling the new School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State, and the University of Arizona's Department of Political Economy and Moral Science. Locally, they are better known as the "freedom schools," and not always admiringly.

Their creation reflects a cultural struggle within academia, one that some conservatives believe requires government intervention to counter a liberal professoriate.

These changes are a direct attack on the ability of the cultural elites to reproduce themselves.

5. When I started reading David Swartz' book *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, I had no idea what I was getting into. I planned to read Bourdieu's book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, but I needed an introduction to the vocabulary he uses. I have thought for a long time I needed a language for discussing power in all its forms. For now, this is the language I think works.

6. I like this series. I have made some changes to the posts, and will continue to do so.

7. Swartz writes very clearly. I feel comfortable with what I learned from his book, maybe too comfortable. Any errors in these posts are mine alone.