

The Central Bank of Symbolic Capital. Bourdieu's *On the State*

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Review article published in *Radical Philosophy*, issue 193 (Sept-Oct), 33-41.

On the State comprises edited versions of three lecture courses that Pierre Bourdieu delivered between 1989 and 1992 at the Collège de France during his tenure of a research chair in sociology at that institution (1982-2001).^{*} Beginning with the well-worn theme of the difficulties of thinking and studying the state, then illustrating the importance of state effects, the lectures conclude with detailed accounts of the sociogenesis of the dynastic and then the bureaucratic state from the twelfth century onwards. These topics indicate that Bourdieu did not aim to develop a general theory of the state as a universal, or of state formation wherever it occurred, nor to undertake comparative historical analyses of states and empires, nor to provide a comprehensive account of particular states. Rather, he aimed to sketch and illustrate a research programme, based on his own core concepts and the logic of practices, which would explore the genesis of the modern European state and some distinctive features and contradictions of its typical *modus operandi*. The analysis in *On the State* draws mainly on secondary analysis of selected studies of England and France with supplementary material drawn from imperial Japan and contemporary China but it also supplements these cases with earlier or parallel studies conducted by Bourdieu and his collaborators on the state's role as 'the central bank of symbolic capital' in organizing other social fields, such as housing, education, marriage, public opinion, law, and the professions.

Le Collège de France

To situate these lectures, it is worth commenting on where they were delivered. The Collège de France is a unique public higher education institution that was founded in

^{*} Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992*, eds. Patrick Champagne, Remi Lenoir, Franck Poupeau, Marie-Christine Rivière, trans. David Fernbach, Polity, Cambridge, 2014. xii + 449pp. ISBN: 978 0 04566 329 6. First published in French in 2012. Subsequent references given as page numbers in the parentheses.

1530 with a dual mandate from the monarch: to be a forum for fundamental research (initially in disciplines outside the established curriculum at the Sorbonne, then in emerging or transdisciplinary fields) and to teach 'knowledge in the making in every field of literature, science and the arts'.¹ This second obligation involves the professors delivering lectures open to the public on a first come, first seated basis. These lectures were not part of any formal scheme of study, there were no exams, and there was no qualification or certificate for auditing. For many lecturers, such as erudite scholars with narrow or specialized interests, the audience was limited to a narrow circle of colleagues and students. Other lecturers with the profile of public intellectuals (think Foucault) or a well-established position within the wider university system (think Bourdieu until the 1990s when he adopted a more militant public profile), the audiences would be larger but quite heterogeneous.²

The three lecture series published in this book illustrate the second aspect of the mission: they reveal Bourdieu at work as he feels and talks his way towards an account of the state framed by his distinctive approach to the genesis of social fields, the logic of practice, and the articulation of different kinds of social capital. The four editors have invested much time and effort in producing a text that is based on recordings, manuscripts, notes taken by the audience, annotations in works in Bourdieu's research library, and personal recollections. They describe the result as 'a lattice of written texts, oral commentaries and more or less improvised reflections on his own approach and on the conditions that led him to present this [approach]' (xi). And this conveys well the feel of lectures intended to teach 'knowledge in the making'. For the lectures indicate the hesitations, digressions, repetitions, reversals, unmet promises, new insights, and cumulative movement typical of this kind of lecture series.

It is clear that Bourdieu used the lectures for their intended purpose and that, like the earlier courses delivered by Foucault at the Collège in the 1970s and early 1980s that were also published posthumously (notably, on the state and governmentality),³ they were not intended for publication in their original or current form. Another difficulty for many of his colleagues, as Bourdieu remarks at several points in this text, is that the public nature of the lectures makes for a heterogeneous and changing audience with uneven degrees of ignorance, knowledge and 'semi-wisdom'. Further, the duties of a research professor at the Collège mean that, no sooner is one lecture course completed, than it is time to begin preparing for the next.

Hence, unless it is a by-product of other parallel and continuing work, there is little time to polish and publish a lecture series. This explains the posthumous nature of Bourdieu's lectures on the state as well as those of Foucault's influential body of Collège lectures.

Another aspect of the genre, according to Bourdieu, is that a lecture gives the lecturer licence to try out ideas, judge audience reactions, elaborate them or move on quickly in the light of these reactions, present the same points in different ways, exaggerate arguments for effect, make speculative or outrageous comments that could never be written down without qualification for an academic readership, and so on. In this sense, we gain insights into his prejudices towards other approaches (notably, in this context, Marxism) as well as his theoretical biases (notably, it seems to me, towards a Durkheimian view of the necessity of moral regulation in modern societies). More generally, these lectures show us Bourdieu at work in his laboratory as he indirectly reveals his logic of research (*Forschungsweise*) or gives explicit advice on how to apply his logic of practices to different social fields rather than directly presenting a finished scientific product in a systematic manner (*Darstellungsweise*).⁴

Bourdieu's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1982 was devoted to the topic of sociology and science. His first five lecture courses covered general sociological themes and he then presented two courses under the rubric 'A propos de l'état' (concerning the state). The first of these dealt with the constitution of the juridical field, eventually moving on to the state as a bureaucratic field and commenting on the tension, discussed by Hegel and Marx, between the role of the bureaucratic state as the representative of the universal interest and the position and practices of the bureaucracy as a self-interested class or social category.⁵ The next lecture course explored the theme of disinterestedness, which he regarded as an essential feature of the state's ability to function as the representative of the universal interest.⁶ These two courses are the immediate precursors of those published in the present volume. The latter were followed in turn by courses on, respectively: the social foundations of the economy;⁷ symbolic goods; the field of production; modes of domination; and general reflections on social fields.

The reader needs to persevere with these 23 lectures, especially if she is less interested in the celebrity, lifework or lecturing style of Pierre Bourdieu in a Collège context, and more interested in what, if anything, he adds to the vast literature on the state and state power. In particular, the reader requires, to flirt with Bourdieu's own

terminology, a well-developed 'patient intellectual capital' to obtain any return on their investment in the text. For it is not until half way through the second lecture series that Bourdieu begins to engage with the state in a systematic manner in his own voice. Before that point we are given brief examples, methodological reflections on the challenges of developing a theory of the state, familiar accounts of Bourdieu's preferred approach, often based on earlier work that does not bear directly on the state (for example, symbolic violence among the Kabyle, marriage among peasants), brief 2-3 page summaries of allegedly inadequate texts on the sociogenesis of empires or the state form, and related or random reflections on the limits of historical sociology, comparative history, political sociology, structural-functionalism, class analysis, and political or legal theory. In addition, the substantive results of the analysis advanced in later lectures have already been published elsewhere and in more polished and focused form in journals and book chapters. In short, the reader needs to be reflexive about the reasons for reading these lectures: above all, they show us Bourdieu at work.

The concept of the state (as opposed to the word) played little role in Bourdieu's work until the 1980s, in part because he regarded it as an abstract collective concept that is dissociated from social agency and practices and therefore requires deconstructing from the viewpoint of the logic of practices before it can be used, if still considered necessary.⁸ Thus, although he undertook research on the aspects of the state from the mid-1960s (dominant ideology, political representation, education, strategies of reproduction, and modes of domination), the state figured mainly in its ordinary language sense of nation-state or welfare-state. In the early 1970s he had also studied 'the field of power' and what one might call the state effect. These studies included work on the emergence of the juridical field, the functioning of the administrative field as revealed in French housing policy, the genesis and structure of the bureaucratic field, and the nature of symbolic capital mobilized by high officials and other fractions of the ruling class. In each case Bourdieu, with or without collaborators, aimed to show 'the concentration process of the different kinds of capital that leads to the constitution of a bureaucratic field able to control the other fields'.⁹ In *Homo Academicus* (1984), the state was described as having the monopoly of symbolic violence; and, in *The State Nobility* (1989), it figured as the regulator of the *grands écoles* as routes to high office, including in the state itself.¹⁰ Thus it was a logical step to move on to analyse the sociogenesis of the state in terms of the primitive

accumulation of symbolic capital, which enables the state to become the main agent and primary instrument of the social construction of reality. So, as the editors of *On the State* put it, in their Afterword to the book, the state becomes 'a field that occupies a position in the structure of fields such that it plays a part in conditioning the functioning of the latter' (380). Perhaps because the owl of Minerva takes flight at dusk, Bourdieu turns to the state in just the period when it is under attack from neoliberal forces and in retreat, leading to the abdication of the state, the dismantling of *res publica*, and growing distrust in high officials' proclaimed devotion to the public good as opposed to their interest in appropriating public goods for private purposes.

At stake in these lectures, then, is the material and symbolic co-constitution of the administrative or bureaucratic apparatus as a specific field with a specific logic. This logic is that of *raison d'état*, whereby high officials gain the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence, that is, the right to speak in the name of the state (the collective interest or public good), legitimated by social consensus and informed public opinion (31-33, 84-5).¹¹ This point is crucial because it constitutes the state as a collective agent with the monopoly over defining the universal (the general will as opposed to will of all).¹² Thus the state apparatus is characterized by an orientation to the production of the public good and of access to public goods. There is already an extensive literature on the development of *raison d'état*, bureaucracy, the tax state, forms of legitimation, and so on. What distinguishes Bourdieu's approach to state formation is that he employs a genetic structuralism (93, 115) to explore it in terms of the sociogenesis of a specific field, with a specific structure, with specific rules of the game, with specifically formed subjects (or agents), with specific contradictions and tensions, and with scope for competing strategies, strategic innovation, social mutation, and, perhaps, eventual failure or decline.

The three lecture courses

The first lecture course is more meta-theoretical in approach than the other two. It poses the problem of how to approach the state and to define it when one cannot point to the state as a material or social entity. I spend more time discussing this volume because it frames the whole approach. Bourdieu begins with a series of reflections on a topic that the British historical sociologist, Philip Abrams, described as 'the difficulties of studying the state'.¹³ Although listed among his sources, Bourdieu does not cite this important article in his lectures. Bourdieu himself refers to the challenge posed by the

almost unthinkable nature of the state. Abrams and Bourdieu concur on the difficulties of thinking about the near unthinkable – which stem from the taken-for-grantedness of the state and, therefore, from the seductive temptation to think the state in terms of categories established by the state and integral to its functioning. Thus, rather than viewing the state as ‘special bodies of armed men, prisons, etc.,’ in the words of Lenin, they share a concern with official discourse, the categories and classifications instituted by the state, and the general symbolic power of the state.¹⁴

For Abrams, the principal difficulty was the obfuscation and mystification produced by the powerful collective misrepresentation of the state as the disinterested representative of the public interest. The phantasmagorical notion of the *state* as a unitary entity obscures the inevitable disunity of the actually existing *state system* as a fragmentary and fragile arrangement of institutionalized political power. Thus the challenge for social scientists is to demystify the state, to radically unmask it, to prove that *the state as a substantial, unitary entity does not always-already exist*.¹⁵ Likewise, for Bourdieu, the near unthinkability of the state is due to the state’s monopoly of symbolic violence and, hence, our ways of thinking about the state. In contrast to Abrams, he appears to subscribe to the Hegelian myth of the state as the defender of the public interest or, at least, to be more interested in when and how the myth of disinterestedness came to be a powerful operational feature of the bureaucratic and political fields. For both Abrams and Bourdieu, this opens space to study efforts by state personnel and others to impose some provisional, temporary and unstable unity on the actually existing state system and to create relative coherence across official policies in diverse fields of action.

Summarizing the two preceding and unpublished lecture courses on the state, Bourdieu claims that ‘our thinking, the very structures of consciousness by which we construct the social world and the particular object that is the state, are very likely the product of the state itself’ (3; see also 105). He continues, ‘if it is so easy to say easy things about this object, that is precisely because we are in a certain sense penetrated by the very thing that we have to study’ (3). He then suggests that ‘the sector of the field of power, which may be called “administrative field” or “field of public office”, this sector that we particularly have in mind when we speak of “state” without further precision, is defined by possession of the legitimate monopoly of physical and symbolic violence’ (3-4). In contrast to the general state theory tradition associated with, among others, Max Weber, which focuses on the state’s legitimate monopoly of

organized coercion, Bourdieu emphasizes symbolic violence. Indeed, he argues that it underlies the state's capacity to deploy the police and military when resorting to physical violence.

This poses the challenge, noted in the second lecture course, of understanding why people obey the state in the absence of violence (162). Gramsci also addressed this question, of course, when he explored, in great detail and across many social fields, the state in its inclusive sense as 'hegemony protected by the armour of coercion'.¹⁶ A second aspect of the state, introduced later in Bourdieu's lectures, is that the state as monopolist of physical and symbolic violence is associated with the state *qua* population contained within the frontiers of the national state (31-2). Moreover, linking the two, he claimed, is the capacity of the state's symbolic violence to create logical conformity (shared views) and moral conformity (shared values) in the population or society that it governs. In short, its legitimate monopoly of symbolic violence is the foundation of physical and moral order. Putting aside for one moment some similarities to Foucault's work on truth regimes, on power-knowledge relations, and on the close linkage between discourse and *dispositif* (apparatus) as well as Gramsci's ideas on hegemony as political, intellectual and moral leadership, Bourdieu's argument seems to rely on some notion of structural causality or retroduction. It seems to involve asking what the world must be like for certain 'state effects' to exist. How has the state come to structure our views, values, institutions, and practices? This leads to a search for a hidden principle as the source of social order. His response is that the state acts in a disinterested way as a *deus absconditus* (a hidden god à la the Pascalian meditations) to create the conditions for social order (4-5). It is unclear at this point (or later) whether Bourdieu is endorsing this quasi-Hegelian account (indicating that his ideas have been penetrated by the myth of the state as the embodiment of the universal interest), describing it as the legitimating principle of state intervention, or employing it as a principle of intelligibility for understanding the rules of the game that guide struggles in the political field dominated by the modern state. What seems to get lost in this analysis is that any account of the universal or public interest is necessarily selective, such that the general will is not a simple mechanical reflection of the will of all.¹⁷ The example that Bourdieu gives is the role of Commissions in transforming the particular into the universal – a function that is enabled by the autonomization of the bureaucratic apparatus, its disembedding from the wider society, an effect that depends on official discourse, theatricalization, and so

on (32-38). What is achieved here is *prosopopoeia* – the act of speaking in the name of and thereby creating the absent figure, that is, the state as the embodiment of the public good (45-49). In other words, officials are artists who create and impose forms of discourse and interaction: the nation, the state, the people, state security, public welfare, etc. (44). But this emphasis on performativity does not explain how the universal, public, or national interest is constructed within the wider social formation as well as within the state and how it privileges some interests over others in this regard. In short, what gets lost in this sketch or stylized model is the problematic of hegemony and domination.

Without posing this kind of question, there is a certain circularity at work in Bourdieu's account of state effects. For 'the state [considered] as the set of social agents unified and subject to the same sovereignty [within the same state territory] is the product of the set of agents commissioned to exercise sovereignty [i.e., public officials]' (37). This corresponds to Abrams's critique of the reified concept of *the state* as a substantial unitary entity, agent, function, or relation that is separated from the rest of society and operates as the essential but hidden structuring mechanism of political life.¹⁸ (For a rare self-criticism in this regard, see 161). On this basis he called for analyses of the state as the real, palpable nexus of institutions, agencies, and practices that is more or less extensive, more or less connected with economic and other social relations, and, at best, only ever relatively unified. Abrams also claims that a false belief in the existence of the state as the deep structure of political life masks the actual role of substantive political institutions and practices in securing domination.

To escape this circularity and develop a practical research programme, Bourdieu recommends a focus on the production of state effects in everyday life – to render the familiar unfamiliar, overcome the amnesia of genesis, de-banalize the state, disclose alternatives foregone and forgotten, reveal the arbitrariness of beginnings, and eschew linear histories (115-17).¹⁹ The aim of this exercise is to disclose the presence of the state in all fields of social life. Here he refers to earlier work on the calendar, the design of the curriculum, the structure of housing markets, the classifications implicit in official statistics, the organization of space, and so forth. Foucault had a similar project. In one of his lectures at the Collège de France, he announced:

it is likely that if the state is what it is today, it is precisely thanks to this governmentality that is at the same time both external and internal to the state, since it is the tactics of government that allow the continual definition

of what should or should not fall within the state's domain, what is public and what private, what is and what is not within the state's competence, and so on. So, if you like, the survival and limits of the state should be understood on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality.²⁰

However, since Bourdieu does not refer to Foucault (except to note, correctly, that his approach to sociogenesis and Foucault's work on genealogy are different), we are deprived of the sociologist's reflections on the philosopher's alternative account of symbolic violence. This is particularly disappointing for those who, like myself, are not already committed Bourdieusians but interested in the intellectual value-added of different approaches to fundamental theoretical and empirical issues. Thus Foucault argued that the intelligibility of a given social phenomenon does not depend on the search for a cause but on the study of 'the constitution or composition of effects'. He recommended that we ask '[h]ow are overall, cumulative effects composed? ... How is the state effect constituted on the basis of a thousand diverse processes?'²¹ In short, Foucault was concerned with the 'state effect' that also interested Bourdieu and provides arguments that would challenge Bourdieu as well as complement his work – Foucault is, of course, just as silent or dismissive as his colleague about his rivals.

More generally, especially in the first lecture series, Bourdieu offers many reflections, partly in a spirit of false modesty, partly as expressions of genuine difficulties, on the inability of any individual (even Bourdieu himself) to master the literature on the state, even in a European context, let alone globally, and provide a totalizing perspective on the state. The state is so complex that it condemns the social scientist to modesty, especially if she tries to totalize theories of the state and empirical findings on many states. Nonetheless, it is worth trying to realize this unrealizable project that deserves to be made (105). Perhaps this led Bourdieu to exercise that self-prescribed regime of 'cerebral hygiene' practiced by Auguste Comte, the French founding father of *sociologie*, in which he refused to allow himself to be contaminated by the inferior ideas expressed by other lecturers and authors.²² For the lectures, reflecting their oral and sometimes oracular style, are replete with dismissive, ill-informed and often arrogant rejections of other scholars, ranging from Marx, Althusser, Gramsci, and virtually all other Marxist theorists through colleagues such as Michel Foucault to structural-functional theorists such as Parsons. This is not an uncommon practice in Bourdieu's work.²³ It has the perhaps unintended consequence that Bourdieu is relieved of the necessity to critically compare his approach to that offered

by these theorists – a challenge that would, as I show below, render it rather less original than he proclaims.

The second lecture course turns to more detailed questions about the state effect. Bourdieu notes that we all know how to ‘do the state’ in everyday life because it has already structured our views and values and given us the ability to complete forms, etc. He recommends focusing on marginal issues neglected by mainstream accounts of the state: language, spelling, certificates, rites of passage, forms, curricula, highway codes, budget cycles, national borders, disinterestedness, public opinion, etc. (110-13, 122-4, 183-4, and *passim*). We should study the genesis of a policy and not waste time fretting about the relative autonomy of the state. The key questions are: how did the state become the ‘central bank of symbolic capital’ and how, in consequence, it can deploy its ‘meta-capital’ to coordinate and reorder the relations between other kinds of capital in the wider society? This requires more attention to the state’s gradual concentration and centralization of symbolic capital than to its relative monopoly of organized coercion or taxation. England managed this through a cultural revolution (on which Bourdieu prefers the account of Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer to the more class-analytical and historical-institutionalist analyses of Perry Anderson: 77-79, 86-87, 141-49); France did so through the gradual separation of the bureaucratic apparatus from the royal household; and Japan did so through educating the samurai into a bureaucratic culture where they could represent the public interest (150-62). This leads to the conclusion, halfway through the second lecture series, that the state is the product of the gradual accumulation of different kinds of capital – economic, physical force, symbolic, cultural or informational. This occurred with the birth of the dynastic state and was consolidated through the transmutation of the latter into the bureaucratic state and, later, into the welfare state (186).

The key to the development of the modern bureaucratic state is that it concentrates different kinds of capital that no individual could normally control and it coordinates and deploys them as a meta-capitalist (186-7). It controls physical force (police and military), economic capital (through its monopoly of taxation in an autonomous economic space created by the state), symbolic force (especially through the unification of the juridical market and the role of law as justification), informational capital (statistics, cartography, theoretical totalization, and super-vision), and cultural capital (construction of national culture, unification of the market in symbolic goods)

(189, 220-25, and passim). This concentration and appropriation of capital as 'meta-capital' creates a new, meta-field of struggles in which the state is both the field of public institutions and a crucial, nodal sector in the general field of power. At stake here:

is the determination of the position that the different fields (economic, intellectual, artistic, etc.) should legitimately occupy in relation to one another. As a result, one could put forward the idea that the state is the almost necessary product of a double process: on the one hand, the differentiation of societies into relatively autonomous fields, and on the other hand, the emergence of a space that concentrates powers over the latter, and in which the struggles are between the fields themselves, between these new agents of history (380)

As this last quotation suggests, the third lecture course is devoted to exploring the genesis of this state from the medieval state to the dynastic state and thence to the bureaucratic state. The argument here is detailed, focuses on the reproduction strategies of dynasties and classes, and identifies the contradictions at the heart of the dynastic state that create the space for movement beyond it. This analysis draws heavily on the work of historians of the French state, English jurisprudence, and also draws analogies with Weber's account of the rise of bureaucracy and rational capitalism. Of particular interest is the discussion of the mechanisms that enable the separation of the royal household and private dynastic interests from the formation of a bureaucratic caste (my term) that is oriented to the public good; and, likewise, the scope that this nonetheless opens for corruption, scandals, and misuse of public office for private gain. Among many other details, such as comments on different forms of nationhood, the state as civic religion, the role of parliament and, later, the mass media, in representing public opinion, it is worth noting that Bourdieu recognizes the growing interdependence of ruler and ruled in complex societies, such that, even in monarchies, the ruler is increasingly ruled by those he rules. This makes it more important to integrate the dominated and, a fortiori, makes its ability to combine its informational capital and broader meta-capital into the power of what Willke calls 'super-vision'.²⁴

Critical Conclusions

As noted in my introduction, this work belongs to a specific genre – reconstructed lectures at the Collège de France - and they must be judged, initially, on this basis. As such we learn more about the author than about the state, on which he had already published many specific case studies in different fields, including material that derives from the work undertaken in the context of his research programme on the bureaucratic state as the monopolist of symbolic violence. In addition, we learn that Bourdieu's general approach can be applied to the state and that its crucial contribution concerns the specificity of the bureaucratic field. This is also a key concern of many other theoretical traditions and here, again, one would have liked to see some constructive discussion of alternative positions so that any intellectual value-added of a Bourdieusian approach becomes clear. Let me illustrate this in relation to my preferred alternative, the strategic-relational view, derived from Poulantzas via Gramsci and Marx, that the state is a social relation.²⁵

Bourdieu dismissed Marx, Gramsci, and Althusser (and scarcely mentions Poulantzas) mainly on the grounds that their work is functionalist and that they fret about relative autonomy. His alternative is that, like all fields, the state

is the instituted-result at a given moment of past and present struggles and confrontations between the contradictory interests of agents who are within or outside the field, but all finding, within the field of positions, supports and resources, particularly legal, for defending them according to the specific logic of the field. ... The field of state institutions – and this is the foundation of the effect of real and ideological neutrality that it produces – tends to make an ever greater place for institutions that are the product of the transaction between classes and are partly situated above class interests, or at least appear to be so ...

Without being the functionary of the universal that Hegel made of it, the field of state institutions, by virtue of the very struggles of which it is the site, can produce policies that are relatively autonomous in relation to what would be a policy narrowly and directly conforming to the interest of the dominant: Because it offers a set of specific and institutionalized powers and resources such as the power to raise taxes or the right to impose regulations (e.g., customs protection or credit circulation), or again the specifically economic power of ensuring financing, either direct (such as subsidies) or indirect (such as the construction of road and rail networks).²⁶

This is a clear statement of the view that the state is a social relation, i.e., a path-dependent material (or institutionally-mediated) condensation of a changing balance of forces oriented to the exercise of state capacities or powers (in the plural) and constrained by the specific form of the state and its claim to represent the general interest to conduct their struggles according to the rules of the game that obtain in the state and political fields.²⁷ His later analyses of the selectivities and biases involved in political representation and of the constitution of public opinion provide good examples of these principles.²⁸ Likewise, the analysis of meta-capital has strong similarities, stripped of its Bourdieusian framing, with work on meta-governance and, in particular, what Andrew Dunsire calls, in a neologism, 'collibration', i.e., the judicious rebalancing by the state of different resources, sites, and stakes of political struggle in the public interest.²⁹ It would also have been interesting to read Bourdieu's views on Foucault's genealogy of governmentality, which has similarities with but also strong differences from his own work in this respect, in particular the concept of *raison d'état*, the governmentalization of the state, and the statization of governmentality.

This unrealistic expectation apart, it is also worth noting six more general limitations of Bourdieu's analysis. First, although it builds on Weber's classic definition of the modern state, it does not engage significantly with two other crucial components of the state according to general state theory tradition to which Weber's work belongs: the state territory and the state population. Indeed, Bourdieu takes for granted that the state is a national territorial state, shows little interest in scale, or, surprisingly, as George Steinmetz notes, colonies and empires.³⁰ Second, while he refers to England and Japan, his analysis is strongly imprinted by the specific features of the French state. This is so distinctive that his compatriots, Bertrand Badie and Pierre Birnbaum, have suggested that only France is a true state, i.e., it is a national society with a strong centre of power that is governed by a clearly demarcated, institutionally differentiated bureaucratic apparatus.³¹ Thus it remains to be seen whether and how far this account applies to the archaic English state (which, for Badie and Birnbaum, has a centre but no state), to federal states like contemporary Germany (a state but no centre), or cases like Switzerland (no centre, no state), let alone to states in the process of formation (such as the European Union) or to failed states.

Third, in terms of the traditional conceptual triplet, polity-politics-policy, Bourdieu provides historical insights into the formation of the bureaucratic polity, how it constructs public policy problems, and how it translates them into policy in particular

social fields. Missing in this analysis is, however, a concern with politics – with the struggles among different social forces that, at a minimum, need to be considered when defining the public interest, and which, in most cases, are reflected in the exercise of state power as a material and symbolic condensation of competing social forces. This is because Bourdieu restricts his analysis of the state to the bureaucratic field, distinguishing it from the juridical field, the parliamentary field, and the political field. This clearly poses the problem of how these come to be articulated, if at all, and, in particular, their relation to the general will or public good. Such issues would be central to a Gramscian, Poulantzian, or strategic-relational analysis of the state. Fourth, while Bourdieu is aware of the scope for scandal and political corruption, he does not discuss the conditions in which the state systematically infringes its own legality and morality. This is particularly pertinent in relation to the war on terror, to national security surveillance, and claims to extra-territoriality by the US deep state – but would also have been relevant to French experience in Algeria or at home. Relatedly, fifth, he presupposes that the bureaucratic state is a constitutional state based on the rule of law or, more recently, a democratic state – and ignores the development of exceptional regimes that suspend constitutions and democratic politics. And, sixth, but not last or least, he does not, as a reflexive sociologist, ask whether this approach to the state is Eurocentric and how it applies to most other states in the world of state. In regard to some of these criticisms, I am sure, the Bourdieusian approach could be applied with benefit; for others, the approach lacks the crucial concepts and tools to undertake such research. This is why the principle of charity to other approaches that Bourdieu invokes - but does not seem to apply in this text - remains so important to the academic enterprise and to practical politics.

¹ See Collège de France, 'Quelques données sur son histoire et son caractère propre' (2010). Available at <http://annuaire-cdf.revues.org/126>, 5-21. Collège de France, 'A unique institution' (2015). Available at <http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/en-institution/index.htm> John Delaunay, 'The Collège de France', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Robert Appleton Company, New York, 1908. Available at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04113a.htm>

² On the distinctions between *erudite*, *mondain*, and *universitaire* chairholders at the Collège de France, see Terry N. Clark, *Prophets and Patrons: The French University and the Emergence of Social Sciences*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1973, pp 52-54.

³ See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2007; *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, trans. Graham Burchell, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2008.

⁴ On this distinction, see Karl Marx, Afterword to the second German edition (1873), in *Capital, Volume I*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1967, p. 14; and ‘1857 Introduction’, in *Grundrisse: Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1993, 81-111.

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Annual Course Report’ (1988). Available at http://www.college-de-france.fr/media/pierre-bourdieu/UPL8528294815781443074_AN_88_bourdieu.pdf

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Annual Course Report’ (1989). Available at http://www.college-de-france.fr/media/pierre-bourdieu/UPL167139494397622522_AN_89_bourdieu.pdf

⁷ Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Social Structures of the Economy*, trans. Chris Turner, Polity, Cambridge, 2005 [2000]. There is no indication in the text that it derives from the relevant lecture course in 1992-93.

⁸ For an overview of Bourdieu’s work on the state, see Rémi Lenoir, ‘Bourdieu et l’état’, *Savoir/Agir* 19 (2012), 117-26; for a comprehensive bibliography of his work on the state, see Gilbert Quélenec, ‘Publications de Pierre Bourdieu sur l’état’ (2012). Available at

http://pierrebourdieunhommage.blogspot.co.uk/2012/12/publications-de-pierre-bourdieu_15.html

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘From the King’s house to the reason of state: A model of the genesis of the bureaucratic field’, *Constellations* 11.1 (2004), 16-36 at p. 34. Also in Loïc Wacquant, *Pierre Bourdieu and Democratic Politics*, Polity, Cambridge, 29-54. This text also includes Bourdieu’s ‘The mystery of ministry: from particular wills to the general will [2001], trans. Richard Nice and Loïc Wacquant, 55-63.

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier, Polity, Cambridge, 1988; *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, trans. Laretta C. Clough, Polity, Cambridge, 1996.

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- ¹¹ See also Bourdieu, 'From the King's house to the reason of state', 16-36.
- ¹² See Bourdieu, 'The mystery of ministry'.
- ¹³ Philip Abrams, 'Notes on the difficulties of studying the state', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1.1 (1988), 59-89.
- ¹⁴ V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* [1917], in *Collected Works*, volume 35, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972, 381-492.
- ¹⁵ Abrams, 'Notes on the difficulties of studying the state', 82 and passim.
- ¹⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1971: 273.
- ¹⁷ Bourdieu, 'The mystery of ministry' (endnote 9), is an insightful discussion of this problem in terms of the disempowerment of mechanical aggregation in secret ballots, the challenges of sustaining participation and dialogue in a Durkheimian guild socialism, and the disenfranchisement produced through delegation to a 'representative' individual or body that makes decisions on behalf of voters. On mystery and ministry in the present text, see also (34), on organized fiduciaries (36-37), on prosopopoeia (45-48), on Commissions (61-2), and the role of the bureaucratic state as the monopolist of meta-capital, able to stipulate the right balance among different types of capital in the national or public interest (366-70).
- ¹⁸ Abrams, 'Notes on the difficulties of studying the state': 82.
- ¹⁹ One could compare here, as Bourdieu does not, the genealogical approach of Foucault, which also aims to denaturalize the taken-for-granted by exploring its origins.
- ²⁰ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 144-45.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 315; cf. ibid. 324-5, 376-8.
- ²² Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte: An Intellectual Biography, Volume 1*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, 485-6.
- ²³ For many other examples, see Jeannine Verdés-Leroux, *Deconstructing Pierre Bourdieu: Against Sociological Terrorism from the Left*, Algora, New York, 2001.
- ²⁴ Helmut Willke, *Supervision des Staates*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1997; cf. Bourdieu on the state's metaperspectival ability to take a viewpoint on viewpoints (28).
- ²⁵ See Bob Jessop, *State Power: A Strategic-Relational Approach*, Polity, Cambridge, 2007.
- ²⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Le sociologue devant l'État' (1982), Lecture at the Association des Sociologues de Langue Française, 27 September-1 October. Reprinted in part,

but excluding the passages cited here, in *L'Humanité*, 23 January 2012.

<http://www.humanite.fr/culture/le-sociologue-devant-l-etat-488311>. The passages cited are in the editors' 'Position of the lectures on the state in Pierre Bourdieu's work' (380-1).

²⁷ Cf. Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, New Left Books, London, 1973; and *State, Power, Socialism*, trans. Patrick Camiller, Verso, London, 1978; Jessop, *State Power*.

²⁸ Bourdieu, 'Mystery and ministry', passim; 'Political representation: *elements for a theory of the political field*' [1980], in Pierre Bourdieu, ed., *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans: Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, Polity, Cambridge, 220-8. Note that the political field is different from the bureaucratic field, the juridical field, and the parliamentary field.

²⁹ Andrew Dunsire, 'Holistic governance', *Public Policy and Administration* 5.4 (1990), 4-19.

³⁰ George Steinmetz, 'On Bourdieu, *Sur l'État*: field theory and the state, colonies, and empires', *Sociologica* 3.1 (2014), 1-13.

³¹ Bertrand Badie and Pierre Birnbaum, *Sociology of the State*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1983; Pierre Bourdieu, Rethinking the state: genesis and structure of the bureaucratic field, *Sociological Theory*, 1994, 12 (1), 1-18.