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A New Approach to Social Differentiation: Social Estates

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ABSTRACT

The paper offers an ownership-based approach to class, economic ownership being defined in terms of rent. It is also stressed that there is a need for a distinction between a socio-economic and juristic approach to property, the latter being in fact far more common in the social sciences. The theoretical framework laid out in the paper draws on some Marxian ideas, though it goes beyond what the author of "Capital" had explicitly to say on social class. The reader's attention could be drawn to the conceptual innovation in the form of the notions of lumpenclasses and quasi-classes. The former concept refers to the structure of social differentiation pertinent to the unofficial economy, while the latter is concerned with, for the most part, non-working women.

Keywords: economic ownership; social class; Weber; Marx; capitalist class; working class; rent; Coase

In terms of social differentiation, one under-theorised question is that of agents of work executed in the particular non-economic structures.

Barring theories of stratification which would classify such agents as members of the so-called middle class, or some subsection of it (which approach, however, shares all the weaknesses of stratification theories(cf. Tittenbrun 2016a) and hence, in our view, it must be rejected) this appears to be a thorny issue for all class-based approaches. In Marxist quarters popular is Nicos Poulantzas' conception as the following illustration of one of his followers shows: "In specific capitalist societies, one part of the function of the dominant capitalist

Social Class (of capital) is given over to agents (individuals) who are not part of the ruling class, and who are, in fact, often subjected to direct capitalist exploitation. This includes the following: functions that insure the extraction of surplus value, such as the supervision-overseeing-control of the production process (technicians, engineers, etc.); functions that insure the cohesion of capitalist political power (state bureaucracy, the judicial apparatus, the military, etc.); functions for the systematization and dissemination of the ruling ideology, such as education.

The product that emerges from the staffing of the apparatuses and processes of the exercising of capitalist power (within the existing social formations) with elements that are not part of the ruling class is, then, the new petty-bourgeoisie class.

That is, these are categories of wage-earners which are not part of the working class, precisely because of their position in the web of functions involved in the exercise of capitalist (economic, political, ideological) power.

In a parallel way, these elements are not part of the capitalist class, to the extent that they are not owners of the means of production (capitalists).

The theoretical approach to the new petty-bourgeoisie class has always constituted a problem for Marxists who ascribed all really existing classes to a mode of production.

Characteristic is the case of N. Poulantzas (1973-a), who considered the new petty-bourgeoisie as an outcome of the “monopolistic phase” of the capitalist mode of production." Poulantzas 1973, p. 33).

In reality, the new petty-bourgeoisie does not constitute a phenomenon of some “contemporary phase” of capitalism, but appears from the very first period of its domination, along with the bourgeoisie state and industry. The above thesis concerning the class position of higher production staff, as well as of higher employees in private enterprises or the state, is based on arguments that do not originate from an economic analysis in the strict sense, but incorporate sociological and political considerations in regard to the overall power relations in capitalist societies. Precisely since, according to Marxist theory, the classes are defined on the field of class struggle on all social levels, one must always consider complex criteria of an economic, sociological, and political nature. the analysis of classes in specific capitalist societies.

Having this thesis as a base, I consider the position of N. Poulantzas (1974) to be correct, according to which the self-employed producers of simple commodities (the traditional petty-bourgeoisie class) and the wage earners who are not part of the working class (the new petty-bourgeoisie class) shall be regarded as fractions of one and the same social class, the petty-bourgeoisie class.

Poulantzas shows that the social role of both groups and their relations to the main classes of the capitalist society (the capitalist and the working class) attain converging features, which justifies the thesis that they belong to the same class” (Milios 2000: 297-8).

In point of fact, neither Poulantzas himself nor his enthusiast(whose differences relative to his master boil down to minor details) proved the convergence of class characteristics of all those varegated categories that are regarded as the purported new petty bourgeoisie, and still less – their convergence with the traditional or old petty bourgeoisie. At the root of this kind of misconceptions lies classism, according to which any member of a society must be necessarily included in one class or another, whether she draws her livelihood from the economy or from the non-economic structures. This is an utterly untenantable position, blurring one of the most important, if not the most relevant boundary line demarcating two basic

societal domains. Inevitably, also, this kind of classism implies scholastic arguments, in the above case manifested, *inter alia*, in subsuming all the state activities under the rubric of a function of capital, as though the prime minister could be equated with a CEO of a definite capitalist corporation. Now, if the phrase "the CEO of the nation" is sometimes used in relation to the president of the U.S, in particular, this is still a metaphor rather than a strict scientific identification. Engels' well-known definition of the bourgeois state is not his peak theoretical achievement, it could be argued. This does not mean, to be sure, that one should go to the other extreme, falling victim to myths about the imperialist state as focused solely on the welfare of its citizenry taken as a whole, without any distinction or discrimination. This would lead us astray as much as the above false position would. But to analyse the issue of class content pertaining to a given state system one needs to differentiate it from the economy with its class overlay in the first place.

Other theorists use instead the term "the new middle class", the main difference being its clearer adherence to the stratification frame of reference thanks to which its inconsistency with the Marxian framework is more immediately apparent. In reality, from the class point of view, self-employed owners of small businesses, lawyers, teachers, government officials, firemen, custom officials etc. have nothing in common. This commonality certainly does not lie in exploitation. Whilst one could attempt to prove that those doing indirectly material labour such as immediate overseers are subject to exploitation, it is unimaginable with reference to the police or military. They simply are not engaged in any direct sense in the process of production of the surplus value.

Given Poulantzas' logic, it would be more consistent to locate the latter, as performing, according to him, the functions of capital, on the other side of the exploitation equation. But honestly either solution makes equally little socio-economic sense. Poulantzas and Milios' position is one of essentialism: in a society in which capital is dominant, all classes must be capital-derived. In order to carry through this theoretical operation, the authors concerned introduce the notion of "functions of capital" whose, *nomen omen*, function is to disguise a scientifically suspect character of the said operation. For although Milios speaks of "a specific capitalist society" it is, within the analytical framework deployed, a misnomer. For from that perspective one does not need any concrete analysis of a given society. What is the point of it, when one knows in advance that such and such agents fulfill the functions of capital which results in them being petty bourgeois, that is, little brethren of fully-fledged capitalists. This particular assumption is in effect anti-empirical as it puts one off from research. In addition, Poulantzas and others' conceptual proposal is marked by pan-classism, i.e. a forceful striving to put any member of a given society in a specific class pigeon-hole.

Apart from the above-discussed in effect ideological and idealistic approach, what, if any, are there perspectives regarding the social groups in question?

Polish economist Oskar Lange (1978), and, following him, sociologist Stanislaw Kozyr Kowalski (1976) have chosen as a tool of description of these groups' social position the term "strata", adding that so understood strata are engaged in various types of non-productive work. Even leaving aside all the controversies that historically accrued to the said notion, the more serious criticism brings to light the fact of rather impossible to eliminate arbitrary meaning of the concept, which, *nb.* is shared by it with the theory of stratification, which uses the same defining the whole approach term. In order to convince oneself that the approach being discussed is flawed, suffice it to ask whether the judge and the prosecutor, or the grammar school teacher and university lecturer are engaged in the same kind of unproductive

work or not. Any answer goes, because there are no precise, or indeed any criteria for outlining the lines of demarcation between the different types of the said form of work.

Fortunately, some cues in that respect may be found, where else, if not with Karl Marx. In his various writings (many of them his only posthumously published manuscripts) uses the term 'nonproductive classes' with reference to social groups, whose livelihood rests on the government taxes, such as the clergy, the law occupations, the state bureaucrats etc. These get to be called "social estates". And there's the rub. The term "Soziale Stände", which figures prominently also in Weber's theory of social differentiation is, as a rule, translated into English erroneously, as 'status groups', or even 'status classes'. Meanwhile, the term has altogether different connotation, and its association with feudalism or the old epoch of the Middle Ages is, in the eyes both great otherwise rivals any drawback, but, rather, the merit of the concept, as it allows to pinpoint such contemporary social groups that bear resemblance to their conceptual forebears in important respects.

How much damage can be brought about by failing to recognise the above considerations, may be illustrated by the following example in which as many as three different theoretical approaches: class theory, estate theory and stratification theory are mercilessly confused: "Weber held that class and status were to be seen as aspects of the distribution of power. When access to material resources is structured through property and market relations, the resource distribution forms the 'class situations' that determine the life chances of their occupants and become the bases of social class formation (Scott, 1996). Similarly, the symbolic resources of social prestige that comprise cultural capital may be formed into 'status situations' that determine styles of life and become the bases for the formation of social estates and status groups. Class structures are differentiated by divisions of property and employment that are the bases of the inequalities of wealth and life chances measured in class schema. Status situations are constituted by cultural definitions of factors such as gender, religion, and ethnicity that become the bases for judgements of social superiority and inferiority" (Scott 2008). Property is not a form of power, as argued elsewhere. Neither it should be associated with the concept of "employment" as an alleged basis of class relations (cf. Tittenbrun 2016b, 2014b). Finally, a status group in the sense of a part of stratification must not be confounded with a social estate.

More broadly, the term 'soziale Stände,' used by both Marx and Weber, is, as a rule, mistranslated into English as 'status groups,' or even 'status classes.' A case in point is the following terminological and conceptual mishmash wherein the author uses in fact two misnomers instead of just one to label the category that Weber definitely termed 'social estate': "When writing about status groups, Weber had in mind mainly such traditional status groupings as pre-modern European estates and Indian castes, that is large-scale sociocultural strata reinforced by religion, law and morality. However, he also mentioned, albeit briefly, a different type of status inequalities and groupings, namely those emerging out of educational, occupational-professional and bureaucratic hierarchies in the processes of rationalization and the spread of "credentialism"³ The development of the diploma from the universities, and business and engineering colleges, and the universal clamour for the creation of educational certificates in all fields make for the formation of a privileged stratum in bureaus and offices. Such certificates support their holders' claim for intermarriages with notable families, claims to adhere to "codes of honour"... claims for a "respectable" remuneration rather than remuneration for work well done, claims for assured advancement and old-age insurance [...].

Success in credentializing occupations depends not only on legitimacy of sociocultural conventions (backed by values), but also on securing sponsorship of large organizations, principally the state. States' willingness and capacity to maintain, defend and enforce conventionalised claims is a crucial factor in their social reproduction and their capacity to give rise to distinct social strata. As both Weber and Perkin stress, the claims of credentialised categories, especially the professionals, evoke status principle of distribution ("according to status conventions"), and are highly ambivalent, if not outright hostile, towards the class principle of distribution ("according to property and market capacities" (Pakulski, Walters 1996).

Now, neither 'social stratum' nor 'status group' applies in the context under consideration. The concept of status group refers to a framework that is at odds with the Weberian one: such as prestige scale employed by crude neo-positivist social surveys which have this much in common with Weber's historical and structural approach as, say, an a wheel chair has with a rocker.

Meanwhile, the Weberian term has in fact an altogether different connotation, and its association with feudalism or the old epoch of the Middle Ages is, rather than a drawback, the merit of the concept, as it allows us to pinpoint such contemporary social groups that bear similarity to their conceptual forebears in important respects. As a matter of fact, there is a considerable similarity between the conception of multiplicity of social estates laid out below and the historical realities of fudal societies. This is, of course, contrary to the common wisdom regarding feudalism. Medieval people, we are assured, conceived of society as being composed of three functionally separated but interdependent 'estates' or 'orders': those who pray; those who fight; those who work. William Caxton, for example, referred to the three estates of 'clerkes, knyghtes, and labourers'. Each estate had its God-appointed duties and social harmony and divine favour depended upon the proper performance of their duties by the members of each estate.

What should be noted in this context is that while the people of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries continued to think in terms of a society of 'estates', they used the word in a manner which implied a somewhat different conception of society than that embodied in the theory of the three estates. Most significantly, they recognised not three, but a multiplicity of different 'estates'. While the language of estates persisted, the term was now applied to far more numerous "occupational or status groups. When the mid-sixteenth-century moralist Robert Crowley penned his *Voyce of the Last Trumpet* for example, he retained the traditional enough purpose of 'callyng al estats of men to the ryght path of their vocation', but he addressed not Caxton's 'clerkes, knyghtes and labourers' but 'twelve several estats of men', namely beggars, servants, yeomen, priests, scholars, learned men, physicians, lawyers" (Wrightson 2015) etc.

The originality or novelty, if you will, of the following notion lies in its grounding in the framework of (extra-economic) property. The reasoning behind the aforementioned notion might, in one regard, draw on some characteristic Marx's formulations. Namely, as hinted above, it is perhaps not a well-known fact that the author of "Capital" used the term 'estate' almost as frequently as Weber. He conceived of those social groups as acquiring their means of subsistence from the nation's taxes. That is to say, they were for Marx part and parcel of the non-economic structure. Interestingly enough, Marx employed in relation to his 'estates' also the label 'non-productive classes'-to underline the above-mentioned circumstance of their non-economic character. Now, what Marx could have meant by employing the said term is

the following: if 'productive' classes, or economic, or still more properly socio-economic classes are based upon economic property relations, then their non-productive counterparts must be grounded in non-economic property relations. To be sure, for the validity of the following theoretical framework the fact of its consistency or, conversely, inconsistency with Marx's approach is utterly irrelevant. The above argument has been cited just to show that there seem to exist strong links between the framework proposed here and historical materialism.

To reiterate the crucial point, estates may be conceived of as based on the relations of non-economic property, as opposed to the relations of economic ownership the socio-economic classes are grounded in.

In turn, non-economic property is manifested in various aspects of the social situation of military officers, clergymen, police officers, lawyers, judges, professional politicians etc. Namely and more specifically, the relations of non-economic property appear as definite material and immaterial goods enjoyed by the representatives of particular estates. As will be seen, in plain language our key concept has much in common with such phrases as privileges, perks, special advantages etc. In order better to comprehend the content of the term „non-economic ownership” a list of respective relations is presented below:

(1) Appropriation, on a monopolistic basis, of certain lucrative positions in the social division of labour, and thereby the benefits tied to them. The monopoly in question is most frequently secured by the regulation of supply of prospective candidates to privileged occupations. A case in point is a variety of professional associations or corporations, acting, as a rule, to bring down or limit the inflow of new lawyers, or physicians, to mention but a few. These professional associations play, in fact, a role of old-time guilds, just as their historical antecedents influence, too, professional practice of their members, including its moral side.

A case in point is the early 20th-century extinction of half of the medical schools in the United States, as it resulted from actions intended to serve estate interests by achieving social closure. Analyses reveal closure intentions in the school ratings assigned by the American Medical Association, according to the 1910 Carnegie-sponsored Flexner report-with predictable effects. Medicine, viewed by many sociologists as a paradigmatic profession (Wilensky 1966: Abbott 1988), paid no better than skilled manual labor in the United States during the latter years of the 19th century (Markowitz and Rosner 1973.) Over the first decades of the 20th century, however, physicians' relative income rose to where it stands today — more than four times that of the average worker (Friedman and Kusnets 1945; England 2007). From another angle, physicians in the United States even now earn approximately twice the income of peers in other advanced economies (Angrisano et al. 2007.) A study analyzes previously unexploited data to identify the causes of what Brown (1979) characterized as the „most effective tool” in medicine's collective mobility process: a precipitous drop in the number of medical schools operating in the United States, from 161 in 1900 to just 74 in 1920. The resulting 40% reduction in graduates, over a period in which the U.S. population increased by approximately the same percentage, initiated a systemic constriction in the supply of medical practitioners, currently reflected in a dependence on graduates of medical schools outside of the United States to fill nearly one in four residencies (National Resident Matching Program 2009.) among other researchers, Light (2004) concluded that the aforementioned decline had been the result of a 'systematic campaign' by the AMA intended „to reduce physician supply”. Likewise, Larson (1977) attributed the

elimination of schools to actions of the American Medical Association, especially its 1906 school inspections and subsequent ratings of schools. Other mechanisms employed in that estate action included the state licensing boards' exams, as suggested by Weber's contention, written contemporaneously, that such tests served as a closure strategy intended „to limit the supply of candidates for these positions and to monopolize them for the holders of educational patents" ([1922] 1978:1000.) The AMA appears to have used these exams as a tool for reducing the number of, not only holders, but also dispensers, of educational patents. What also applies to the developments concerned is Weber's observation that a common component of a profession's closure strategy is the establishment of regulated curricula ([1922] 1978.) Evidence supporting closure was found in given researchers' analyses of the AMA's ratings, which reflected clear biases favouring all-male and high tuition schools, and against black schools and those in states producing physicians at high rates. The ratings also appeared to reflect an intention to achieve occupational closure through alliances with other parties. The analyses concerned revealed that the AMA favoured the traditional sectarians—former competitors, who had joined them to combat upstart medical sects" (Weiss, Miller 2010).

And, to come back to the starting point of this argument, Larson (1977) observed that the aforementioned measures were the cause of the dramatic improvement in the average physician's income as well.

And regarding another key social estate, what refers to the following specific country, applies also to other societies: "To be able to practise as a lawyer in Australia, a graduate has to work for a lawyer with an unrestricted practising certificate for two years" (Holden, Dixon 2015). The authors, who are themselves professors of law, justify the practice along conventional lines: Whilst they admit that "It is easy to dismiss these kinds of regulations as part of closed-shop-style arrangements that limit supply and drive up the incomes of those lucky enough to be 'in the club'", they immediately counter this argument using, sadly, a faulty reasoning, based-as it does-on the *petitio principii* fallacy:

"Yet those seeking access to lawyers who aren't big corporations (individuals transacting a property, writing a will, getting divorced, facing minor criminal charges, or engaged in other relatively minor litigation) are not in a great position to judge the quality of the services they receive. Often that quality won't be apparent until after the legal work is done, and clients still have to pay even if they are not fully satisfied with the quality of the work" (Holden, Dixon 2015). The problem, in other words, with the above argument is that the defenders of the legal profession take first as their premise what should be demonstrated: i.e. the purported merit of the aforementioned practice of internship in a specific legal application. There are many ways in which to acquire such a kind of experience.

In more general terms, Collins (1971, 1979, 1980) argued that what he confusingly calls certain occupational status groups persuaded American legislatures in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that various jobs ought to be reserved for persons with college degrees; laws were passed that licensed many occupations and required educational credentials for those applying for those licenses.

According to that position, once an occupation has become credentialed, large sectors of society are excluded from entry simply by their lack of formal qualification. But additional dynamics come into play, whereby persons from privileged social strata who hire applicants for these jobs tend to favor those of their own class or status group when selecting among applicants. At one level, this involves unconscious social psychological processes that bias a person's judgment such that in-group individuals are perceived as more competent and/or

more trustworthy, while out-group individuals are perceived as less able and less dependable (Fiske 1993). At another level, social networks prove important for finding and securing jobs in the United States and other countries, both at the professional end of the labor market (Granovetter 1973) and at the blue-collar end (Royster 2003). Social networks often run along status-group lines; and when a job opening occurs, individuals sponsor credentialed people from their own networks who are “like us” (Elliott 1998; Smith 2007). Institution prestige adds to this process; it is not simply having a degree or credential, but whether one has received a qualification from a college whose prestige matches that of current employees.

Under educational credentialism, certain jobs come to resemble sinecures or social monopolies; their high earnings reflect the privileged kinds of people who typically occupy them, both their social origins and their educational career paths, rather than the nature of skills required for the job. Credentialed occupations may portray themselves as exceptionally skillful and requiring years of training, but studies of those occupations suggest that most of their skills are learned on the job rather than during college, and that the long years of training function primarily to protect (p. 15) already-established practitioners from new competition (Collins 1979). In sum, according to Collins (1988:180), “the educational credentialing process has become a prime basis for stratification” in modern societies.

Credentialism widens earnings inequalities between jobs, and individuals respond by seeking more education, preferably from the most prestigious institution possible, in order to qualify themselves for top-quality jobs. The whole education system turns into a contest or race, in which different social classes and status groups compete for the best credentials from the best institutions. Part of this competition involves, as those subscribing to the perspective under consideration term it, cultural capital: prestigious schools draw upon forms of knowledge and linguistic skills that children from privileged families obtain at home, but that poorer families lack; consequently, children from upper-class families tend to outperform classmates from less affluent or less educated families (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

There is no denying that both estate and class disparities exist and, as all the evidence suggests, play an increasingly important role in today's developed capitalism. But to recognise those inequalities is one thing, and to conceptualise it in terms of the purported 'cultural capital' is quite another. The thing is, the term mentioned above is, simply stated, a misnomer, deprived of any real empirical referent. A more extensive argument to that effect can be found in (Tittenbrun 2013, 2014a). process limited competition for entry into credentialed jobs. Nowadays, credentialed jobs in America include relatively low-level occupations, from child daycare workers to real estate salespeople to haircutters—for which some U.S. states require college coursework—and where the rationale for requiring government-sanctioned licenses or degrees is that consumers need to be protected from unscrupulous or inept practitioners. Credentialed occupations also include the highly paid “professions” of law and medicine, where the government delegates licensing authority to professional associations that require degrees and institute their own exams for those who wish to practice the profession.

This possession in the case of many professions takes an even hereditary form. There is much anecdotal evidence referring to the entire actor, academic, lawyer, etc. lineages. Whilst the recent successes of genetics may seem to provide the defenders of this kind of social divisions WITH a useful rationale for the aforementioned inter-generational transfer of social positions, the argument is only seemingly credible; genetic determinism is in fact as untenable with reference to intelligence as in relation too other personality and psychological traits,

First and foremost, from a dialectical standpoint the opposition between nature and nurture, which is taken for granted under the conventional wisdom, is in actual fact based on the misrecognition of the nature of the genes and their impact on human personality.

The fact of the matter is that genes do not necessarily act in just one simple manner; the influence of some genes may be such, for instance, that a person will be better able to learn. In a similar vein, other genes could prompt some individuals to self-select more stimulating environments.

Overall, it could be said that it cannot be denied that what has been usually treated as congenital abilities is more complicated than that insofar as the purported biological basis of the makes its presence felt at least in part via a genetic influence on the environment. and this clearly means that a genetic base for human intelligence is not only about one's nature but also one's nurture.

This is all the more the case, of course, that no one has discovered so far, to this author's knowledge, any genetic endowment for specific occupations, such as a film actor, lawyer politician, and so on. Meanwhile, cases of the non-economic property relation referred to above abound: „for almost two years leading up to the November 2000 elections, expectations focused on Vice President Albert Gore Jr. and Texas Governor George W. Bush.

Both were the sons of important political families. Their rivalry sparked an immediate interest in the „return of political dynasties”.

Gore, an able and hardworking politician, was described as a child of privilege whose public career had begun literally at birth, when his father persuaded the local paper to carry the news on its front page. After twenty-four years of government service Gore had compiled an impressive record" (Bello 2003.). Bush, too, was an aspiring politician, a two-term governor who had smoothly assumed control of his father's political network. Yet he suffered even more from the 'silver-spoon' label. Following closely in his father's footsteps, albeit without equaling his accomplishments, Bush seemed derivative, uncertain: "a bad copy of his father. For many, he was aptly described by a comment aimed at the senior Bush in 1988 by the Texas commissioner of agriculture, Jim Hightower, later a radio personality: 'He is a man who was born on third base and thinks he hit a triple'.

Many people were offended by the idea that the presidency could be claimed as a birthright, as though it were family property" (Bello 2003).

There is also a more systematic study on the matter available whose findings suggest that the acquisition of basic academic degree, being as such a springboard to any better job and bearable future is taking in the U.S. on the character of hereditary privilege.

Tom Mortenson used census data to track who's been getting bachelor degrees since 1970. in degree attainment. Mortenson notes "the country's (brief) commitment to equalizing educational opportunity" in the 1970s and points out that it had ended by late in that decade. Of course, in practice, class and estate criteria intersect in that, for example, the federal government to should be blamed for reducing financial aid to families for whom sending children to college is a financial hardship. States, the author cited claims, "have been aggressively shifting the costs of higher education from state taxpayers to students and their families without regard to the ability of low- and moderate-income

Mortenson also holds the universities themselves at fault because "they practice enrollment management to maximize institutional profits and prestige and ignore their public responsibilities to enroll the new populations of students that represent growing shares of our

country's future" (Gracey 2004), which policy is by no means accidental, as it expresses the estate affinity of the university decision-makers and many of their preferred candidates.

What these and many other estate positions often give is:

(2) Special social connections, which are transferable into economic advantages.

In this context it is pertinent to draw attention to a study, according to which „a lawyer with the right connections-conceptualized in terms of communication networks with colleagues-benefits from better quality work-related information that ultimately translates into higher economic attainment. In addition, a lawyer also benefits from the endorsement by high-status network partners given that a lawyer's exact performance quality is highly uncertain, even unknowable, from the viewpoint of prospective clients. In other words, the prestige of one's network alters serves as a market signal to help reduce the information asymmetry confronting prospective buyers. In this way, the process of status transfer by affiliation with prominent others enhances the focal actors" (lawyers") reputation that, in turn, increases their earnings" (Kim 2013).

Another interesting research study of the state bureaucracy in Nepal has found that " most often, administrative decisions are taken on the basis of informal connections and close affinities than by formal and impersonal rules" (Ishtiaq and Rameshwor 2009), which underlines the relevance of the aforementioned type of property relation, as opposed-it is worthy of mention in that connection-to the Weberian model of rational bureaucracy whose ideal-typical character does not save it from rather major criticisms, based-as they do-on empirical grounds. After all, social science deals with the mundane realities rather than Platonic forms and shadows in the notorious cave.

(3) Access to insider, privileged information. This refers, among others, to the police. Their occupational position gives them a higher salary, social benefits, and some other advantages, which are named below but, frankly speaking, often the chief appeal of the occupation lies in the fact that it creates many opportunities of extra earnings. These, in turn, are linked to the ability to take advantage of the spy ring and information they collect. This information has often very high monetary value, and can be sold to, for example, private detectives, parents of lost children, journalists, owners of vehicles that have been stolen from them by professional thieves, acting, as a rule, on behalf of car dealers, mechanics or smugglers with whom the police often co-operate, as they do with other criminals.

(4) The ability to enter into short-term relations of lumpenproperty. This applies in particular to bribes received in many countries, notably those of immature capitalism by police officers, and bribes and kickbacks obtained by government officials.

A case in point is a recent move by Virginia legislators who in April 2015 set out to reform the state's ethics laws by passing a new limit on gifts to public officials. But while the move was a response to the conviction last year of former Gov. Robert F. McDonnell on corruption charges, it is unclear, according to many commentators, whether the new measure would actually have prohibited any of the actions that precipitated the case.

The state has some of the nation's most forgiving ethics laws and earned an F from the State Integrity Investigation, a data-driven ranking of state government accountability and transparency published in 2012 by the Center for Public Integrity, Global Integrity and Public Radio International. In September, McDonnell, a Republican, was convicted on charges stemming from more than \$100,000 in undisclosed gifts and loans he and his family received from a supporter.

The new law places a \$100 annual limit on gifts to public officials from lobbyists and some people with state business and will require that lawmakers submit the disclosures electronically for publication in an online database.

In 2014, lawmakers had passed a \$250 cap — previously there had been no limits — but the law applied only to “tangible” gifts, meaning lobbyists could continue to spend unlimited amounts on travel, entertainment and food for public officials. That distinction drew widespread criticism, and McAuliffe, a Democrat, made passing a broader cap one of his top priorities the next year. The 2014 legislation also required officials to disclose gifts to their immediate family members, closing a loophole that allowed much of the money McDonnell’s family received to go unreported (officials, and since 2014 their immediate family too, must report all gifts over \$50).

Passage of the new measure occurred after a back-and-forth between Governor McAuliffe and lawmakers over a series of amendments he proposed to the original bill, which the legislature passed in February. Lawmakers eventually accepted only a few of the governor’s amendments, which they passed in a rushed one-day special session. Language in the final version tightens the state’s limits on gifts while including new provisions that seem to maintain parts of the loophole that led to criticism of last year’s legislation.

In point of fact, while the new law will make it harder for people seeking influence to lavish officials with expensive gifts, there are still opportunities. Below four ways one can still give beyond the \$100 cap are listed:

- Don’t be a lobbyist – Just like in last year’s bill, the cap applies only to lobbyists and their employers or to people seeking contracts with a state agency, provided the beneficiary of the gift is an employee of or has authority over the agency in question. There’s disagreement over whether this would have applied to businessman Jonnie R. Williams Sr., who gave the gifts and loans to McDonnell and his family. Williams wanted the state to fund studies of his product, a health supplement. Lawmakers are still required to disclose all gifts, whether they come from lobbyists — and therefore fall under the cap — or not.
- Pay for travel to certain meetings – The law exempts from the gift cap payments related to meetings of national groups such as the National Conference of State Legislatures or the American Legislative Exchange Council, a controversial conservative group. Cristina Nuckols, a spokeswoman for McAuliffe, said that another section of the state’s disclosure requirements, which covers payments for talks and meetings, will require lawmakers to disclose payments for travel, even if they are not considered gifts. Essentially, though, this clause maintains one part of the “intangible” exemption that the 2014 law created.
- Invite your friends – Another provision exempts “widely attended events” from the gift limits. Lawmakers say the point of this was to allow them to continue to attend Rotary Club dinners or Farm Bureau meetings without having to worry whether the food served would be allowed under the law. It also means that an industry group and its lobbyists can spend unlimited amounts wining and dining lawmakers as long as they invite more than 25 people. Officials will still have to report these gifts.
- Or don’t – The bill says that food and beverages at an event where a public official is “performing official duties related to his public service,” do not qualify as gifts. Theoretically, then, a lobbyist can continue to provide unlimited steak and scotch to officials as long as they are at events that meet that criterion. But what is perhaps most

important, it also means lawmakers will no longer be required to disclose such food and beverage “gifts,” since they no longer fit the definition of a gift (Kuznets 2015).

Needless to say, akin examples abound in basically all the regions of the world. Another case in point has been provided by Matthew Condon’s book, "All Fall Down" whose anti-hero is Queensland Police Commissioner Terry Lewis and his colourful story amid the demise of the Rat Pack and their corrupt system of graft payments known as “The Joke”.

Condon writes, *inter alia*, that: "there was a [local] sergeant here, whose ... duty on a Friday afternoon was to go around the brothels and the other places that were being tolerated and collect the money."

“At three o’clock in the afternoon he’d poke it in an envelope through the wall up at [12 Garfield Drive], the home of Commissioner Lewis. He said that was his duty, that he took a police car, he drove around the whole Sunshine Coast and did the collections, and then at three o’clock it was his duty to drop the envelope through the wall up there" (2015).”

"Case after case in Queensland courts against alleged corrupt police, illegal casino operators or friends to crooked officers fell over like dominoes. Within the force, police officers who dared voice their opinions against a corrupt regime were forced out of the job and the state, drank themselves to death, or lost their families under the pressure of the need to do what was right. Hundreds of promising careers were destroyed, further perpetuating a cycle of corruption by leaving behind those who toed the line.

And Herbert, master conman and liar, organised supremely a corrupt system that flourished in the Lewis era and proved resilient to everything thrown at it. Over time, its impact was far greater than its original intention – the effort to keep it hidden from sight and the wheels moving smoothly in turn reached into the public service, the judiciary and into the halls of government itself, and began buckling them out of shape" (Condon 2014).

(5) Appropriation of advantages listed under the previous two items can be facilitated and strengthened by the use of exclusive professional languages, jargons or codes. Among the social estates there are a lot of examples of the use of language or speech in order to create appearances of high knowledge seemingly enjoyed by this or that member of the social estate, whereas put in the plain language it would in all likelihood turn out to be quite comprehensible for the laymen, but it is precisely their ignorance that is the point.

That this kind of non-economic property relation can well have grave consequences even for human life, can be shown on the London example wherein The fire fighters, The police, London AMBULANCE SERVICE, and thereby Overall command and control failed in a critical emergency situation owing precisely to the jargon hampering their communications.

A succession of senior figures from across the capital's emergency services have appeared before Lady Justice Hallett - but on the final day of the inquests, she told them to use plain English, rather than refer to things like the "Conference Demountable Unit from the Management Resource Unit".

"Management jargon is taking over organisations," said Lady Justice Hallett. "When it comes to something like a major incident, people do not understand what the other person is.

"All you senior people from these organisations are allowing yourselves to be taken over by management jargon... You people at the top need to say 'We have to communicate with other people and we communicate with plain English'." (BBC News 2015).

(6) Privileged access to various consumer goods, new auto models and brands tried by journalists, mobile telephones and notebooks or tablets given to the journalists and politicians, special policy offers submitted by insurance companies. Below the reader can find a couple of concrete examples illustrating both the present item and the subsequent one. „Couturier Fred Hayman, ex-owner of Giorgio Beverly Hills, has paid house calls to stars like Jay Leno and Pat and Vanna to dress them for their T.V. shows. Adrian Khashoggi and Imelda Marcos, as holders of the 1984 dud-venture American Express Black Card, were entitled to private after-hours shopping at posh stores like Neiman Marcus.

[...] artists would not be seen dead in the same experiences and settings as their audiences; members of Congress avoid their constituents in anything but the most formal settings. House Speaker Tom Foley paid Jhoon Rhee Tae Kwon Do to send grandmaster Jhoon Rhee himself for regular lessons in the House gym. Music industry lawyer Alan Grubman gets his shoes shined while he sits at his desk. Lobbyists from Burson Marsteller hire messengers at \$36 an hour to wait in line for seats at congressional hearings. John Malkovich and Branford Marsalis have their feet massaged by an office-caller at \$38 a half hour. Salomon Brothers partners have their own barber on their corridor. Dan Quayle would leave his office to get his hair cut at the Senate barber shop, but he took a dozen Secret Service men with him and emptied out the salon. While at Vanity Fair, Tina Brown got her sensible coif done at home several times a week by a stylist from the pricey Upper East Side salon Ayervais. The important thing is not simply ease and comfort-but distance, distance, distance, from the people with whom ordinary citizens are forced to live their lives.

Simple, common experiences, such as reading a newspaper or seeing a play, are turned into singular privileges. John Reed, the chairman of Citibank, actually employs someone to read the newspaper for him and deliver a brief synopsis (washing the newsprint off your hands is such a hassle.) And to keep smartly abreast of the theatrical scene, Alec Baldwin sends his personal assistant to view shows for him (in Los Angeles and New York), requiring a detailed synopsis and critique upon return. Important journalists employ research assistants who relieve them of the painful chore of actually reporting their own stories and columns themselves. They are then left with the Olympian task of „news analysis.” But they are also robbed of the sudden insight or lead that the hassle of practicing journalism might provide them.

Does anyone employ an assistant to think for him? To breathe for him? To cut his own food? Some come close. When being interviewed by Rolling Stone in 1990, thirtysomething heartthrob crooner Daryl Hall stared longingly at a pitcher of water on the table in front of him, until an assistant manager who'd entered the room happened to notice and quickly poured him a glass. Carrie Latt Wiatt, a Hollywood dietician who tells people what to eat and sends them ready-made food, told Vanity Fair that she no longer had John Landis's business because his meatloaf wasn't pre-cut. Michael Jackson apparently fed himself but travelled with a personal cook. At a 1990 black-lie gala for Tommy Mattola on the Columbia Pictures lot, Jackson (arriving with several bodyguards and staying for less than one hour) was prepared a special meal by his mystic Sufi chef, who appeared at the table much to the surprise of the other guests- including Mattola, Jay Leno, Gloria Estefan and Sony-USA CEO Mickey Schulhof-who made do with the house fare.

Oh, to be David Geffen, and not have to pack one's belongings, or even concern oneself with luggage, flying from Los Angeles to New York with no bags and merely arranging through an assistant for a new wardrobe to be bought and delivered upon your arrival. White

House staffers are powerful enough to travel on Air Force I or II need not put up with checkins, baggage claims or even red lights once they've rolled into town; presidential cavalcades roar right through.

Even more prestigious are those privileges that, like Tyson's instant passport, allow for more than mere comfort or luxury and actually put one above the law. It's easy to slip out of jury duty with a crafty enough excuse, but one would assume that even the mighty have to go downtown to get a driver's license.

Well, maybe not. Katherine Graham used to send a Washington Post police reporter to renew her license. Hollywood mogul Robert Evans boasts that he's still got enough clout to renew his by merely sending his chauffeur down to the DMV, without taking the driving or eye test. (Some cities are more perk-accommodating than others. No one in Beverly Hills has to stand in line at the DMV, which allows you to make an appointment for your test.) Recently Representative Phil Crane and his daughters raised such a ruckus at Washington's Zei nightclub that a bouncer told the Post, „If he wasn't a congressman, I'd have had them arrested.”

When the voters go into one of their periodic fits about corruption in Washington, they might occasionally focus on the subtler byways of corruption found in hassle-free living rather than the big conflicts of interest. There's nothing more distancing for a politician than to be divorced from the mundanities of the lives of his constituents. (Ron Brown didn't pay his help's Social Security, not because he couldn't afford it, but because he couldn't be bothered.) And it's instructive, perhaps, that the most egregious examples of hassle-avoidance are invariably found in the lives of those who don't have to give a fig about public accountability. Some even buy out of the hassle of decision-making, What to eat at Café des Artistes? According to James B. Stewart's Den of Thieves, Ivan Boesky used to order eight entrees on the menu, taste them all and then decide. Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan, that staunch democrat, was vacationing in Aspen recently and purchased one of every item in stock at the local Banana Republic. But even that effort of civic decision-making was too much of a strain. He wasn't even in the store. He'd sent an assistant [...] Liz Taylor used to boast that she'd never in her life set foot in a bank. [...] The LSD prophet, Timothy Leary, after the death of his wife promptly enlisted uxorial attendance in the form of a 120-an-hour service called Dial-A-Wife. Leary says he has a woman come to his home and cook. She shops for him, picks him up at the airport, plans parties, balances his checkbook and recently helped him organize his archives for Yale, Leary also has three personal assistants, a travel secretary and an agent. Best of all, he says he's at work on a sitcom premised on the Dial-A-Wife concept.

There are those who don't even want to leave the security of their homes. Marlon Brando had a personal shopper come to his home and then sent her out in search of clothing and gifts. Catalogs, of course, help the proletarian shopper stay at home in much the same way, but what to do when the goods are for someone else? Send the Horchow shipment to a professional gift-wrapper, as Joan Collins does, at \$10 to \$50 per package. For the newest and hauteest, no catalogs exist. So when New York socialite Mica Ertegün decided not to travel to Paris for the fashion shows this fall (what a pain), Christian Lacroix shipped an extremely limited edition video-showing of his line to her.

The real trouble with hassle-avoidance, as Khashoggi's privilege attests, is that even by the standards of most perks it's a peculiarly undemocratic form of privilege. It purifies the otherwise sullied elixir of power and wealth into the distilled desire to be as far away as

possible from the toiling, huddled masses. Money is no longer enough. Hassle-avoidance is the privilege that most effectively distances the individual from the necessities of democratic living. Thus, it corrupts the notion of equal citizenship even more effectively than mere disproportionate accumulation of wealth. The daily civic experience of waiting for buses, filling out forms, caring for your own kids, even having your own mundane thoughts is the stuff of which some kind of civil equality is made. The search for a hassle-free life is ultimately an attempt to shirk personal and social responsibilities of all kinds.

It's not merely the preserve of crazily rich movie stars or the superfamous. Hassle-avoidance has trickled down the economy in a way that wealth never did.

[...] From the days of the Greek philosophers to the present," wrote Veblen, "a degree of leisure and of exemption from contact with such industrial processes as serve the immediate everyday purposes of human life has ever been recognized by thoughtful men as a prerequisite to a worthy or beautiful, or even a blameless, human life." In the crammed, overpopulated, frantic postindustrial world, the life of leisure is a life free of those tiny details — from renewing a passport to walking a dog — that somehow manage to consume our bodies and addle our minds. The ultimate perk of the ruling class is no longer merely money or power, but the ability to be free of hassles. And it's a perk that poses a particular — if hardly mortal — threat to the notion of a democratic culture.

The bliss of hassle-free existence depends first and foremost on other people who can dispense with all the pesky minutiae of daily life. In other words, you need staff. From Zoe Baird with her two famous Peruvians, there's an almost infinite progression of hassle-avoidance techniques. Demi Moore, for example, has six assistants: one for her clothes, one for her hair, one for makeup, a bodyguard, a nanny and a general-purpose personal assistant, who has her own personal assistant, who is thinking of hiring one of her own. But Demi is the queen of Do It Yourself compared with her husband, Bruce Willis, who required twenty-two assistants on the set of *Billy Bathgate*, including four or five bodyguards, a driver, a personal chef, a personal trainer, a masseuse and a hair and makeup stylist, according to a *Vanity Fair* profile. Pia Zadora retained an assistant to do housework and shave Pia's armpits. Peter Guber has a chauffeur. No big deal, except that he's driven around in a Range Rover. Free-wheeling Steven Spielberg drives himself. But he has a security van follow him. Woody and Mia, when they were together, liked to stroll along Fifth Avenue.

But they had a cream-colored Rolls Royce creep along beside them, in case they got tired and needed a lift home.

Henry Kissinger, too, is fond of the constitutional, often accompanied by his dog Amelia; his bodyguard walks behind him to take care of any scooper duties.

And when Kissinger is on vacation, the dog is sent by limousine to Mrs. Peeper's, a kennel in rural Maryland, where she is put up in a private room as a house guest. On holiday at the Westwood Marquis in Beverly Hills, Julio Iglesias was seen walking onto the lawn in front of his cabana followed by a blonde in a bikini and a squatty butler. Selecting the ideal spot for sunning himself, Julio snapped his fingers and two towels were placed on the ground for him and his companion. After fifteen minutes, the sun's position had changed, and Julio stood up. His assistant bounced to attention and produced fresh towels, which he then placed on the ground a few degrees to the west of the first two" (Konigsberg 2012).

(7) Special, often exclusive participation in various cultural or sporting events.

(8) The right to live in official, often luxurious apartments.

(9) The ability to take advantage of special recreational centres and facilities.

(10) An access to special, exclusive medical services of high standard.

By way of example, "Aged Rolling Stone Keith Richards, in his attempts to dry out in the mid-1970s, did not follow the course of most addicts, which was to go to the hospital for detoxification. According to biographer Victor Bockris, Richards contracted a nurse to his home to administer apomorphine treatments and stay at his side for three to five days at a time, comforting him through heroin withdrawal hell and keeping him from rummaging about his medicine cabinet" (Konigsberg 2012).

(11) The right to a shorter occupational expenditure of own labour power, be it in the form of longer holidays, or earlier retirement. Items 8 to 11 express, in fact, a positively privileged capacity for reproduction and renewal of one's own labour power.

(12) The ability to take advantage of various reliefs and discounts, e.g. in transportation and communication, such as lower internet or cell telephone charges.

(13) Distinctive attire available to given social estates: police officers, firemen and customs officials' uniforms, professorial togas, gowns of clergymen.

For the sake of illustration, take white coats that have always been a powerful symbol, but it is important to note that the white coat ceremony is actually a recent invention, having been developed in the U.S. in 1993 by the Arnold P Gold Foundation."

This ceremony is now a mainstay at the majority of medical schools and many nursing and allied health schools as well, meant to connect student to the 'noble tradition of doctoring.' And it's not just tradition that keeps physicians in white coats. Doctors give a variety of reasons for wearing them – to carry papers, because hospitals are cold or for a confidence boost when facing a stressful situation. Female physicians also face the challenge of being misidentified if they don't wear a white coat" (Lederer 14).

The following two authors, who both are professionally connected with medicine, aptly point out that "Clothing for doctors is more than just a matter of personal style: it is an emblem of their specialty, training and culture.

Making a good first impression In some cases, a physician's attire is functional. A surgeon's scrubs protect regular clothes from stains and patients from infection.

Sometimes, it's about creating a good first impression and projecting the more professional, conservative image often associated with medicine.

Go to a doctor's office, for instance, and you're more likely to find physicians donning a shirt and tie, or jacket and blouse when interacting with their patients. In almost all of these cases, the emblematic uniform of physicians – the white coat – is present" (Chopra, Saint 2015).

The above-mentioned Dr Vineet Chopra and Dr Sanjay Saint wrote an article arguing that patients prefer white coats. They suggested that formal attire with long-sleeved shirts and ties for men and business attire for women be worn while they conduct a survey of thousands of patients from the US, Italy, Switzerland and Japan (Lederer 14). The right to hold definite official titles which refer to professorships, police officers, military officers, lawyers or doctors. One is entitled to use such titles on one's business cards, for example, as well as the respective forms are socially obligatory in professional interactions the persons concerned enter with the beneficiaries of their services or other people (this distinction is required because the police and military, unlike university lecturers or school teachers do not render

any personal services, i.e. do not satisfy individual needs or wants, but only some collective needs of society as a whole).

(15) The right to exercise power and control over the behaviour of other people. This applies, naturally, not only to the police, but also to, for example, the confessor who, within the mechanism of expiation is able to mete out punishments to the believers.

This does not mean that one can concur with Breen's reductionist view which he puts this way: "status groups and parties, along with classes are, for Weber, the major phenomena of the distribution of power in society. The distinction between them concerns the different resources that each can bring to influence the distribution of life chances"(2004). Political power is something completely different to disposal over goods or labour power in connection with which Weber used the similar word, and the latter is in turn irreducible to authority manifested in the realm of social estates (as opposed to, of course, "status groups").

(16) The right to command special esteem or respect, which pertains to military officers, court judges, teachers and the academia. It follows that social respect is here understood as necessarily manifested in concrete behaviours. The importance of this kind of relations is so substantial that it is difficult to leave out them entirely from one's span of analysis even when one subscribes to such microsociological currents as symbolic interactionism; Stub (1972), for example, stresses this point when he writes, "The prestige, honor, and deference that characterise many social relationships are manifested in symbolic form. Initial claims for status are made by the presentation or display of status symbols" (p. 217).

The above observation is correct as far as it goes, but the microsocial or dyadic focus of the said sociological strand means that those characterisations are kind of left hanging in the air, which is another way of saying that they are not embedded in any concrete social structures, absent which their cognitive worth is rather limited, to put it mildly. By contrast, our own analytic framework is an attempt at such a location of given relations in the context of social estates as those groups to which this sort of relations inherently belong.

(17) Diplomatic immunity which may take the form of an agreement between sovereign governments to exclude diplomats from local laws, immunity from prosecution (international law), exclusion of governments or their officials from prosecution under international law, judicial immunity, i.e. immunity of a judge or magistrate in the course of their official duties, parliamentary immunity or immunity granted to elected officials during their tenure and in the course of their duties, qualified immunity in the United States, immunity of individuals performing tasks as part of the government's actions, sovereign immunity, the prevention of lawsuits or prosecution against rulers or governments without their given consent.

(18) Copyright or intellectual property relations (scholars, columnists, etc.)

Particular social estates are characterised by peculiar configurations of the non-economic- property relations listed above. It could be argued, therefore, that the notion in question is theoretically grounded, which more often than not is missing in those conceptions that could be regarded as alternative to our estate approach inasmuch as they overlap with the latter in terms of their subject. Thus, for instance, two Australian social scientists define their basic concept of political class as „The group of professional politicians” or „those who have gained election to national office in the federal.

Parliament, or election to one of the six state or two territory assemblies. While this definition covers a large number of people-just over 800, at the present time”-in practice their account focuses on the group of national representatives, who currently number 224”

(Borchert, Zeiss 2003: 27). It can be only surmised that the noun „class” has been picked up by the authors as a springboard to its reputedly higher scientific status. Alas, this can only be attained by means of solid analytical work rather than simple labelling; and the truth is, the former is missing in their descriptive, empiricist work.

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