

Three basic social classes in contemporary capitalism

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Since social formations have a mixed character, we cannot speak of only two classes. The origin of the concept of class in Marx's writings probably comes from Saint Simon and David Ricardo.¹ The latter's influence on both Marxist political economics and class theory is apparent. When he writes on the question of social classes in his last, unfinished chapter of the third volume of *Capital*, Marx states that there are three classes in capitalism, defined, as in Ricardo, by their role in the relations of production, and thus by the revenues they receive:

The owners of mere labour-power, the owners of capital and the landowners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground-rent – in other words wage-laborers, capitalist and landowners – form the three great classes of modern society based on the capitalist mode of production (1894: 1025).

In other words, in the English social formation that Marx was acquainted with – the social formation that in this book we are calling classical or competitive capitalism -, "modern society" was dominantly capitalist (since it was based on this mode of production) and yet divided in three fundamental classes – the bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the landowners. Though it existed, the technobureaucracy, or the bureaucracy, is not mentioned by Marx, since it was inexpressive as a class. At that time, it was no more than a status group with no real social definition. The bourgeoisie and proletariat are classes specific to the capitalist mode of production, whereas the landed class was a legacy of feudalism. If we were to look at the English social formation of the sixteenth century, on the other hand, we would probably also see three classes: landowners, serfs and bourgeoisie. The first two correspond to the dominant mode of production, feudalism, while the latter was already signaling the emergence of a new mode of production.

In contemporary managers' capitalism, these are also three basic social classes. The social formations in the central rich countries and also in the ones characterized by industrialized underdevelopment are dominantly capitalist, but increasingly technobureaucratic. "Increasingly technobureaucratic" does not mean increasingly statist, although we are using the words "technobureaucratic" and "statist" indifferently to define the mode of production where the only bureaucratic organization is the state in ideal terms. A new technobureaucratic class is emerging in these social formations, both at the level of large private enterprise and the state. The bureaucracy is no longer a status group made up of state officials, but rather a private and state

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technobureaucracy, involved in military and civil life, working for the state and for the big corporations.

This new class is becoming the heart of the new "middle-class" in contemporary society, or more precisely, the new middle strata. Just as the bourgeoisie was the middle stratum par excellence of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the managerial class is in the contemporary middle strata. When capitalism was coming into its own as the dominant mode of production, the middle sectors of the emerging bourgeoisie as well as small-scale commodity producers, peasants and craftsmen made up the middle strata, many of whom became members of the bourgeoisie.

In his fundamental work on American middle strata, C. Wright Mills identifies these two groups as the "old middle-class" and the "new middle-class". The latter basically corresponds to the managerial class, since Wright Mills defines the new middle-class in broad terms:

The great bulk of the new middle-class are of the lower middle-income brackets, but regardless of how social stature is measured, types of white-collar men and women range from almost the top to almost the bottom of modern society (1951: 64). These new middle strata have increased at an extraordinary pace. In referring to the United States, Mills states:

In the early nineteenth century, although there are no exact figures, probably four-fifths of the occupied population were self-employed enterprises; by 1870, only about one-third, and in 1940, only about one-fifth, were still in this old middle-class. Many of the remaining four-fifths of the people who now earn a living do so by working for the 2 or 3 per cent of the population who now own 40 or 50 per cent of the private property in the United States. Among these workers are the members of the new middle-class, white-collar people on salary (1951: 63).

In 1870, excluding the upper bourgeoisie, the old middle-class corresponded to 33% of the population, the new middle-class to 6%, and the workers to 61%; in 1940 these percentages changed to 20, 25 and 55% respectively (1951: 63). As the ranks of the old middle strata as well as wage workers decreased, those of the managers who received monthly salaries increased.

Based on these data for 1870 and 1940 and on Erik Olin Wright's data for 1969, we can tentatively reconstruct the evolution of social classes in the United States (Table 1). The old middle-class and the new middle-class, according to Wright Mills' classification, correspond basically to the bourgeoisie and the managerial class. Olin Wright (1978: 56) used somewhat different criteria to divide American society, but they are consistent with Wright Mill's or mine. He built a social matrix, using two columns ("self employed" and "wage earners") and two lines ("mental labour" and "manual labour"). If we consider all the manual laborers as the workers, the self-employed mental laborers as the bourgeoisie, and the wage-earners (actually salary-earners) mental laborers as the managerial class, for 1969 we will have only 8 per cent for the bourgeoisie, 51 per cent for the workers and already 41 per cent for the technobureaucracy. As can be seen in Table 1, while the workers and specially the bourgeoisie

relatively diminished, the managerial class increased sharply from 1870 to 1969.

Table 1 Evolution of Social Classes in the U.S. (% of population)

	1870	1940	1969
Bourgeoisie	33	20	8
Workers	61	55	51
Technobureaucracy	6	25	41
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: C. Wright Mills (1951: 63) and Erick Olin Wright (1978: 56).

Val Burrell (1980) has also conducted a study on the development of the technobureaucracy or managerial middle-class. The results are more modest, but perhaps more precise. He classifies the new middle-class according to two criteria: whether one works in the public or private sector, and the type of activity performed. He divides the latter into four categories: the supervision and control of the labor process (managers, foremen, technical supervisors, etc.), the reproduction of capitalist social relations (teachers, social workers, health managers, state administrators, lawyers, cultural workers, etc.) the accounting and realization of value (managers, sales, accounting, banking, finance, insurance, etc.), and the transformations of the technical means of production (scientists, engineers, research technicians, etc.) (1980: 29). The results of his study, based on the United States census, have shown that the new middle-class positions accounted for 6 per cent of the U.S. labor force in 1900 and for twenty-five per cent in 1978.

Table 2: Social classes in Britain, 2013

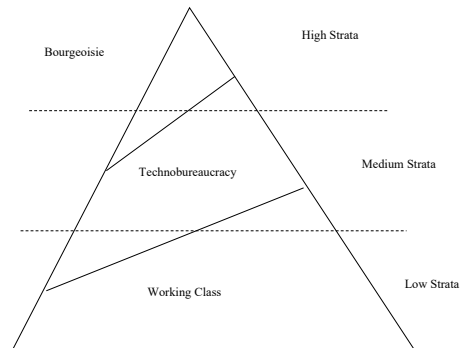
Social classes	% of Population	Average Income £
Elite	6	89,000
Established middle class	25	47,000
Technical middle class	6	38,000
New affluent workers	15	moderate
Traditional working class	14	13,000
Emergent service workers	19	21,000
Precariat	15	8,000

Source: "Great British Class Survey", BBC Lab, United Kingdom, 2013.

In 2013, a survey of 160000 residents in the United Kingdom, conducted by BBC with the participation of academic sociologists, divided the British population in seven social classes. To define the social classes, they combined the contributions of John H. Goldthorpe (1969, 1995), who developed a class system based on individuals' employment positions with Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) definition of social classes in terms of economic, cultural and social capital, and came out with seven social classes, which are depicted in Table 2, with the respective participation in the population and average income.² The problem with this methodology is that in the income of the household we don't have the distinction of wages and salaries from rents of capital (interests, dividends and real-state rents). Thus, the capitalist and the technobureaucratic class are mixed.

Following the same basic structure used in Figure 1, we go on to describe a mixed contemporary social formation – managers' capitalism – in Figure 3.2. In terms of social strata, we see a marked increase in the middle strata, which now includes some workers. In terms of social class, we see the managerial class emerging as a third class, since we are not analyzing a pure mode of production but rather a social formation. This new class extends into both the upper and lower strata. The bourgeoisie and the working class have made way for the increasing numbers of the managers as the arrows indicate. The middle strata and the technobureaucracy are expanding. The former are largely made up of the new middle-class, white-collar workers, but middle-level bourgeois and skilled workers also constitute part of this strata.

Figure 1 Strata and Class in managers' capitalism



The upper technobureaucratic stratum is formed by what Galbraith (1967) called the "technostructure". Becker and Sklar called it a "managerial bourgeoisie" or a "corporate and international class", mixing capitalist and technobureaucratic social actors. According to them the new social class encompasses "the entrepreneurial elite, managers of firms, senior state functionaries, leading politicians, members of learned professions and similar standing in all spheres of society" (1987: 7). The alternative that I am presenting in this book is on one hand to clearly distinguish the upper bourgeoisie from the upper technobureaucracy and on the other hand to register that in managers' capitalism the two social classes are associates.

Becker's and Sklar's "postimperialist approach", however, is very interesting, first, as it realistically acknowledges the emergence of the new class in the industrialized countries, and second, as they postulate that in the developing countries a "managerial bourgeoisie" is linked by ties of mutual interest with the corporate international bourgeoisie. Jeff Frieden, however, is correct when he warns that the "managerial bourgeoisie" will not necessarily continue to grow in importance and hegemony in the developing countries (1987: 182). In Brazil, the technobureaucratic class lost political power since late 1970s, when the transition to democracy began.

The "middle-class question"

One motive for defining a technobureaucratic class within contemporary capitalist social formations is to present a coherent theoretical solution to the "question of the middle-class" from a Marxist open approach – the one that is being adopted in this book for the analysis of social classes and the state. This

question has been characterized by the theoretical inability of conventional Marxist analysis to come up with a satisfactory explanation regarding for enormous increase of white-collar workers in the nineteenth century. Office workers, salespeople, clerks, managers, technicians, a variety of consultants, military officials and administrators on all levels have multiplied at an astonishing pace in contemporary social formations. A "new middle-class" has emerged in all the industrialized countries. The importance of this "new middle-class" is fundamental to contemporary managers' capitalism, so that it becomes extremely difficult to do any economic or political analysis without considering the role of this class. Its identification either with the bourgeoisie or with the proletariat is obviously unacceptable. Those who believe they have embraced the basic principles of Marx's class theory frequently use the term "middle-class" to identify this great mass of managers or white-collar workers. They deny a new class is emerging, but when they speak of the "middle-class" of the "new middle-class", or of the "salaried middle-class", they are acknowledging the emergence of a new class and of new relations of production.

Marx did, in fact, at times use the expression "middle-class", but only to identify the petite bourgeoisie and sometimes parts the middle level of the bourgeoisie. This enormous number of managers, officials, consultants, and salespeople working in large public and private, civil and military organizations had not yet appeared. Bureaucrats did not constitute a class as yet; they were simply a status group. Consequently, there is no solution for the question of the middle-class in Marx's class theory. Calling this new, immense social grouping the "middle-class" or "new middle-class" is a solution which is incompatible with class theory that is based on the role social classes play in the relations of production. It's an adequate solution for functionalist sociologists whose aim is simply to identify and describe the various social strata in terms of power, prestige and income. We can use the term middle "class", although in this case it would be more appropriate to use middle strata or middle layer. Many Marxists are aware of this, but the theoretical solutions to this problem are either very deceptive or unsatisfactory. We can identify three basic solutions which in the final analysis only add up to one: incorporate the new class either within the bourgeoisie, or within the proletariat, or divide it in two, with the bottom half forming part of the proletariat, and the top half, of the bourgeoisie.³

This "theoretical solution" is implicit or explicit in all "orthodox" Marxist solutions to this question. The highest strata of the bourgeoisie are identified with the bourgeoisie and the rest of the new class, from engineers and middle management to office workers and clerks, is indiscriminately lumped together with the proletariat. Therefore, the bourgeoisie, working class and technobureaucracy lose their specific character as classes. It is no longer possible to define them as a function of concrete relations of production. The bourgeoisie is no longer made up exclusively of those who own the means of production, since the top level of the managerial class is included in their numbers. The working class is no longer characterized by manual or productive labor as it now includes an enormous mass of workers, from office workers to engineers. This identification of the managers as working class is usually based

on the fact that they are "wage workers". First, they are not wage workers, since they receive salaries rather than wages. Second, if office workers are wage workers, so too are high-level managers.

The fact is that this attempt at resolving the "question of the middle-class" is untenable. It can be explained only as a poverty of theory or perhaps the desire of many intellectuals and politicians who belong to the managerial class to identify themselves with the working class. In this sense, we can see the incorporation of low and middle-class managers to the working class as a political strategy quite common to the left, which not only seeks to identify itself but also potential followers with the class which would hold power in the hold the future: the proletariat.

"Proletarianization" of the middle-class

Thus, this poverty of theory is wedded to a strategy for class alliance, which is a mere possibility. The result is the expeditious incorporation of the bulk of the "new middle-class" into the working class. To substantiate this position empirically, the constantly recurring though unfounded argument of the proletarianization of the middle-class appears once more. Nevertheless, its inadequacy is apparent, a function of the very question that is under examination. If the "middle-class question" exists at all, this is because this social group has increased rather than decreased and subsequently has become a fundamental social and political reality of our time, completely distinct from the working class.

Though theoretically imprecise, the expression "middle-class" has become a tool of common usage for the social scientist or anyone else who wishes to analyze current society in terms of economics and politics. This has occurred precisely because this social group has become a true social class, the managerial middle-class, rather than merged with the working class. It is true that Marx spoke of the "proletarianization of the middle-class", but he was referring to that process within the traditional middle-class, more precisely the proletarianization of the petite bourgeoisie, characterized by small-scale mercantile production. This occurred then and still occurs, though the petite bourgeoisie continues to survive as an auxiliary class to the bourgeoisie.⁴ What Marx could not predict and therefore could not analyze was the appearance of a new class of managers, since the indications of its emergence were only weak and imprecise in his time.

Given the inadequacy of the position on the proletarianization of the middle-class, some authors have resorted to another kind of argument to incorporate the lower and middle levels of the managerial class within the working class. This is the increasing mechanization of their work as well as their tendency to unionize.⁵ In fact, mechanization is taking place, in certain cases blurring the clear-cut distinction between office workers and production workers. The low-level managerial class is also exploited within the framework of managers' capitalism and tends to organize itself into unions. Nevertheless there is no reason to believe that unions are the exclusive domain of the working class. In

fact, their unionization does not necessarily imply an increase in working class power. In referring to the unionization of white-collar workers, Anthony Giddens observes:

Where there are marked divergences and conflicts between manual and non-manual unions, these persist, or may even become accentuated; where there is a higher degree of mutual penetration, the rise in white-collar unionism does not significantly alter such situation. (1973: 193).

Office workers and production workers

The fundamental difference between an office worker, that is, a low-level managerial, and a production worker, is the fact that the former performs *coordinative* labor while the latter performs productive or operative labor. Even though production workers often need greater technical knowledge than office workers, they work directly in production, whereas the office worker does paperwork. Such labor is not directly involved in production but rather an auxiliary function of coordination and control. A further basic distinction is that the office worker follows a bureaucratic career, passing through various steps or positions, whereas the production worker's chances for promotion are quite limited. Production workers generally reach their high point in earnings before their thirtieth birthday. Prior to this they had time to develop the specialized skills necessary for the jobs, while still having their youthful vitality. The office workers, on the other hand, have a long wait until they reach the high point in terms of career and salary. We see this evidenced by the greater social mobility between generations among office employees, or in more general terms, among managers, than among productive workers. This greater mobility derives precisely from the fact that career is specific to the technobureaucrat.⁶

Office workers tend to behave very differently from production workers. The reason for that may be either the distinct nature of the low-level technobureaucrat's work (coordinative labor) in relation to production work (productive labor), or the existence of a career and social mobility for the former and not the latter. The key point is that by the nature of their labor, production workers are the object of capitalist exploitation, of the extraction of the surplus value that they produce. They feel this, or know this. On the other hand, though the office workers are also exploited, they perform coordinative labor and feel to some extent that they own a share, however small, of the bureaucratic organization. The relations of production are different, and so are the situations of these two classes. As Maurice Halbwachs noted:

One of the chief determinants of their behavior (and here they differ radically from workers proper) seems to be their devotion to the business they work for. There are obvious reasons for this... Clerical workers, like civil servants, occupy a different position from workers. Clerical workers are morally concerned with the progress of their firm (1955: 106-107).

Both conservative theories on the "increasingly bourgeois nature of the working class", and Marxist theories of the "proletarianization of the managers" point to the similarity between office workers and production workers. However, Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer and Platt's critique of this view is

based on extensive research on the British working class in the seventies. They noted:

The emphasis placed on the increasing comparability of standards of income and consumption and white-collar occupations had led to neglect of the fact that the two categories remain much more clearly differentiated when their members are considered as producers. Despite the possibly leveling effects of some forms of advanced technology and modern employment policies, the work situation of white-collar employees is still generally superior of that of manual wage earners in terms of working conditions and amenities, continuity of employment, fringe benefits, long term income projects and promotion chances (1969: 24).

What differentiates the low-level managers from the production workers is that the managers consider themselves to be a part of the bureaucratic organization they work for and in which there is always the perspective of promotion. The managers feel in some way to be partners in the organization because in some way they *own* a small part of the organization, whereas the production workers are absolutely denied ownership of any sort. Although the "new working class" made up of technical workers and managers is much more a desire than a reality, this is not to say that there are no alliances between fractions of the lower and medium level managers and production workers. Communist parties and parties of the left in general throughout the capitalist world are an example of this type of alliance. But it is a far cry from equating the managerial class, and more specifically its lower layer, with the working class. This result can only be arrived at through considerable theoretical machinations.

Another solution like the incorporation of the lower and middle levels of the managerial class into the working class, is to leave this question unresolved. This approach emphasizes the similarities of the two groups, emphasizing the need for and viability of their alliance. This concept is typified by the group linked to the French Communist Party who wrote *Le Capitalisme Monopoliste d'Etat* (Paul Boccard et al., 1971). Instead of dividing society into three classes as a supposedly orthodox Marxist group would do (bourgeoisie, proletariat and petite bourgeoisie [vestiges of small mercantile production in the French social formation]), the CME group divides French society into the four large "classes" or "strata" we see in Table 3. They are the working class, the intermediate wage-earning strata, the non-salaried middle strata, and leaders of capitalist enterprises and consultants to the bourgeoisie. One of the CME group's primary concerns is to show that the working class has grown not only in absolute terms but also in relative terms. This is evidently a response to the theory widely spread, especially by the North America functionalist sociologists, on the increasingly bourgeois nature of the working class as well as its relative decrease in size. While the CME group's ideological motivation is apparent, so is that of the conservative sociologists.

Who is right or wrong in this argument depends on the concept of working class we employ when examining the facts. If we use working class in a

restricted sense, then there is a relative decrease; a broader sense of the term would imply an increase. In accordance with Marxist tradition, the working class is understood in a limited sense, made up of "productive" manual laborers, that is producers of material goods or, rather, producers of surplus value. Paradoxically, it is a limited concept of this sort that conservative sociologists use in concluding that the working class is shrinking in relative terms. Though the CME group claims to be loyal to Marx, it seeks to enlarge the concept of working class as well as of productive labor so that this contingent is not decreased.

Table 3 – Social structure of French employed population

	1954	1962	1968
Working Class	40.3	43.0	44.5
Intermediate Wage Earning Strata	20.4	25.6	30.5
Non-Salaried Middle Strata	34.3	26.9	21.0
Leaders of Capitalist Enterprises and Consultants to the Bourgeoisie	5.0	4.5	4.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Paul Boccara et al. (1971: 253), based on data from the I.N.S.E.E.

The fundamental problem is the inclusion of manual service workers (non-material production) within the working class. There has been an extraordinary growth in their numbers, but if we stick to a strictly Marxist concept of productive labor, service workers would have to be excluded. Marx considered productive labor to be not that which produced only surplus value but also material goods. In fact, the production of surplus value can only be realized through the production of material goods which Marx equated with wealth, following the tradition of Adam Smith. In principle, services are part of the

circulation rather than the production of surplus value. However it is clear that this kind of analysis becomes less meaningful, both in political and economic terms, in a world in which the service sector submits to the logic of capitalist accumulation. In defining productive labor and limiting his concept of the working class, Marx was much more concerned with defining historical categories which would allow him to evaluate the advance of the capitalist mode of production, and consequently of the industrialization process, than in defining logical abstract categories. At that time, trade was still submitted to the principles of speculative mercantile capitalism, and services in general were of a personal nature, located outside of capitalism. Thus, it was natural for Marx to exclude workers involved in these activities from his concept of productive labor, even when this involved manual labor. But it makes no sense to make a new interpretation of Marx's concept of the productive labor, just because one wants to broaden the concept of working class. It is more reasonable to abandon the concept of productive work, when we must analyze contemporary society – a society where the transition to capitalism has already been completed. The concept of productive work was important to Adam Smith and to Marx for explaining the transition to capitalism. It is a rather poor concept to be utilized in managers' capitalism.

The political-theoretical question the CME group faced when they looked at the question of a third social class was the growth of the middle classes. In Table 3, we see its relative participation in the work force of the intermediate wage earning strata moved from 21% in 1954 to 34.3% in 1968 of the employed French population in the short space of fourteen years. This growth took place at the expense of the non-salaried middle strata – the petite bourgeoisie working in small-scale agricultural, commercial and industrial units, as well as of independent professions, i.e., the lawyers and doctors who previously were independent managers become salaried workers. Engineers, technical experts, managers, consultants and researchers entered the economy with the expectation of earning salaries. The increase in these activities, in turn, is explained by the growing complexity of sales and distribution systems in advanced capitalist societies, as well as by the need for sophisticated commercial and communications services. Considering this enormous growth of the middle strata, the necessary conclusion is to acknowledge the existence of a new class – the managerial class, and to see that this social class, more than the other the bourgeoisie or the technobureaucracy, must be divided in layers, and to recognize the possibility that the low managerial class and the working class have common interests that may result in formation of a political alliance.

Poulantzas and the middle-class question

Among Marxist social scientists, it was probably Nicos Poulantzas who came closest to a theoretical solution for the question of the middle-class in managers' capitalism. Nevertheless, his attempt fell short of success. His concern with Marxist orthodoxy led him to a solution which looks to the past rather than analyzing the direction history has taken based on the development of the productive forces as well as the emergence of a new mode of production.

Nonetheless, the strength of his theoretical work and his prestige have influenced an increasing number of Marxists to accept the idea of a new emerging class.

Poulantzas was one of the most notable Marxist political scientists of his period. Possessing a remarkable capacity for abstract reasoning, he showed imagination, courage to think freely, and scientific rigor in his contributions to the questions of class and the state. It was this scientific rigor which would not allow him to leave the question of the middle strata unresolved. He saw that their integration into either the bourgeoisie or the working class, as well as their designation as an "intermediate wage-earning strata" or "new middle-class" was entirely unsatisfactory from a Marxist point of view. On the other hand, Poulantzas clearly perceived that a new social class existed, and that it was formed of a multitude of bureaucrats or white-collar employees (technical experts, engineers, managers, salespeople, and office workers). Although other Marxists had acknowledged this fact prior to Poulantzas, starting with the first contributions of Bruno Rizzi (1939), they were referring to bureaucracies in countries that were already dominantly state-controlled. Poulantzas was in all probability the first Marxist of intellectual prestige to acknowledge the existence of the new class in capitalist countries and to examine it in adequate academic terms. Considering the numbers and social and political presence of the new bureaucrats, it would be useless to deny their class nature. Thus he decided, in *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, to acknowledge this fact, attributing this group the status of social class and calling it the "new petty bourgeoisie" (1974: 195-347).

To call this new class the "new petty bourgeoisie" may be proof of imaginative thinking, but it is an unacceptable solution. Certainly, there are other names besides technobureaucracy or managerial middle-class that are adequate for the new class appearing in the contemporary capitalism. Since it is a new phenomenon, we may call it whatever we wish. What is important, however, is to give it an adequate theoretical framework. Poulantzas was unable to do this with the term new petty bourgeoisie. He explained the new class in terms of the past, failing to see new relations of production relative to a new mode of production. Nor did he provide a coherent and integrated solution to explain Soviet-type social formations.

Poulantzas divides the petty bourgeoisie into two classes: traditional petty bourgeoisie and new petty bourgeoisie. However, the link he makes between the two classes is a negative one: the traditional petty bourgeoisie (small-scale production and ownership) and the new petty bourgeoisie (non-productive wage earners) both have in common the fact that they neither belong to the bourgeoisie nor the working class (1974: 206).

Yet manifesting his permanent tendency to favor political factors to the detriment of economic ones, Poulantzas states that this criterion "only appears" to be negative. This is because, given the polarization between the bourgeoisie and the working class and the exclusion of the two petty bourgeoisies, "it

actually produces economic 'similarities' which have common political and ideological effects" (1974: 206). In this way, the basic concepts of historical materialism are inverted. The class conflict rather than the relations of production will determine the class structure of society. There is no doubt that economicism is an untenable position. It loses sight of the dialectical nature of the relations between the productive forces and relations of production, as well as of the relations of production with the ideological superstructure. Yet so is Poulantzas' 180-degree turn in the direction of politicism. In doing so he implicitly abandons the basic postulates of historical materialism and Marxist class theory.

Poulantzas never clarifies the economic similarities between crafts people, small-scale agricultural producers and those involved in small-scale commerce, who perform labor directly while at the same time own capital and employ labor – i.e., the petty bourgeoisie – and the managers who work in large bureaucratic organizations. Actually they are so different in both economic and managerial terms, and the relations of production involved are so dissimilar, that there is no way to find common economic ground between the two groups. Poulantzas soon forsakes the search for economic similarities, but insists on finding points in common on the political level. He states:

The latter (the traditional petty bourgeoisie) although it occupies in economic relations a place different from that of the new petty bourgeoisie, is nevertheless characterized at the ideological level by certain analogous features, though there are also still some differences. (1974: 294).

The "analogous features" Poulantzas finds common to both classes are in fact rather obvious. They are the political attitudes typically expressed by the social strata located between the dominant and the dominated class, such as "fear of proletarianization" or a critical attitude toward "large fortunes."

It is possible to understand why a noted political scientist like Poulantzas would espouse such an odd thesis – that of bringing together the technobureaucracy, a new emerging class, with the petty bourgeoisie, and old class constantly threatened with extinction. He was clear about the existence of a new social class and he needed to give it a name. "New petty bourgeoisie" was convenient, since like the traditional petty bourgeoisie, the new class was a middle stratum. Secondly, it permitted him to subordinate class theory to the political factor, to class struggle, a dominant tendency in his thinking. It's strange to think that class struggle can determine class position, but that is what Poulantzas declares in this passage:

If the traditional and the new petty bourgeoisie can be considered as belonging to the same class, this is because social classes are only determined in the class struggle, and because these groupings are precisely both polarized in relation to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. (1974: 294).

But Poulantzas had a third decisive reason for equating or bringing together what we call the technobureaucracy with the traditional petty bourgeoisie. He admitted that a new class existed, but did not want to admit the historical and ideological consequences of this fact. In this way he is led contradictorily to

deny autonomous and long term ideological and political viewpoints to the new class. He states:

The petty bourgeoisie actually has, in long run, no autonomous class political position of its own. This simply means that, in a capitalist social formation, there is only the bourgeois way and the proletarian way (the socialist way): there is no such thing as the 'third way', which various theories of the 'middle-class' insist on. The two basic classes are the bourgeoisie and the working class; there is no such thing as a 'petty bourgeois mode of production. (1974: 297)

In fact, it is impossible to speak of a petty bourgeois mode of production. It did not exist in the past, as the petty bourgeoisie never became the dominant class, nor even a fundamental class in each social formation. It could not exist today. The petty bourgeoisie and its respective relations of production have always existed secondarily in capitalist formations. But while the petty bourgeois mode of production has never occurred in history in a dominant way, and the petty bourgeoisie has never been the dominant class, we cannot say the same of the technobureaucracy. It has attained the dominant position in all the "communist" or state-controlled countries and is present – although in a subordinate and very contradictory way – in capitalist countries. Unlike the petty bourgeoisie, the technobureaucracy is a class with a clearly defined vocation for power. This vocation is expressed through attempts to administer the entire social production in rational terms. Poulantzas came close to this fact with his concept of the new petty bourgeoisie, recognizing the class nature of this new group. But he was unable to take the theoretical step necessary to reach a more general and effectively historical vision of this class in contemporary society.

¹ See Anthony Giddens (1973: 23-25) regarding the influence of Saint Simon on Marx's theory of class.

² For a summary of the methodology adopted and the findings, see Mike Savage et al. (2013).

³ As Anthony Giddens observes "Since the turn of the century, when the rate of relative increase in the white-collar sector first became apparent, the idea has been advanced – particularly, of course, by Marxist authors – that this 'new middle-class' will become split into two: because it is not really a class at all, since its position, and the outlook and attitudes of its members, cannot be interpreted in terms of property relations." (1973: 192-193).

⁴ According to the calculations made by the Capitalisme Monopoliste d'Etat group, the "non-wage-earning middle strata", that is, the petty bourgeoisie, made up of small farmers, salesmen, craftsmen and other types of independent workers, has decreased sharply in France. They represented 34,3% of the active population in 1954, but only 21% in 1968. (Paul Boccara et al., 1971)

⁵ For an analysis of the mechanization and fragmentation of office work, see Paul Boccara et al. (1971: 242-244).

⁶ Poulantzas empirically confirms the greater social mobility of the "new petty bourgeoisie", that is, the technobureaucracy. He states: "There are almost no manual workers at all who move up into the bourgeoisie in the course of their working lives, while this does occur for some 10 per cent of the male white-collar 'employees' who

change their position (becoming higher-level managers) and the proportion is still greater for the intermediate staff." (1974: 283). His data refers to France today.