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**Corrupt Compared to What?  
Greece, Capitalist Interests, and the Specular Purity of the State**

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## **Introduction: Political Corruption and Greece**

Political corruption is under attack. Technocrats, mainstream academics, and media pundits *qua* ‘experts’ have increasingly set their sights upon the blight of corruption. The most visible and symptomatic of these recent efforts to counter corruption have been those propagated by Transparency International (TI). Funded by the World Bank, various national ministries, and a few dozen multinational corporations, including the infamous Enron and Arthur Anderson, TI bills itself as an “international movement” that is fighting corruption through “national, regional and global coalitions, embracing the state, civil society and the private sector.”<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of TI, political corruption should be opposed because of the dramatic effects it has upon the material well being of the world’s poor and dispossessed. For Peter Eigen, a former World Bank official and the founder and Chairman of TI, corruption is a main cause of poverty and suffering:

Political elites and their cronies continue to take kickbacks at every opportunity. Hand in glove with corrupt business people, they are trapping whole nations in poverty and hampering sustainable development (TI 2002).

Similarly, Tunku Abdul Aziz, TI’s Vice-Chairman, has asserted that:

Corruption continues to deny the poor, the marginalised, and the least educated members of every society the social, economic and political benefits that should properly accrue to them (TI 2002).

Upon releasing its 2002 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), TI declared that “Over two thirds of the world’s countries are rife with corruption – a spectre haunting

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<sup>1</sup> This is according to the TI web site. The quotes are taken from Peter Eigen’s description of TI at [http://www.transparency.org/about\\_ti/index.html](http://www.transparency.org/about_ti/index.html). The list of donors can be found at [http://www.transparency.org/about\\_ti/donors.html](http://www.transparency.org/about_ti/donors.html), it should be noted that as of the end of 2002 one could navigate to the page where this list of donors appears directly through TI’s web site. There is no longer a link to this list of donors on the TI web site but it can be accessed directly by entering the full address listed above.

Latin America, the former Soviet states and vast swathes of Africa (TI 2002).”

Within this context, Greece received special mention as, by far, the most corrupt of any state within the European Union. Greece was ranked 44<sup>th</sup> out of 102 countries with a raw score of 4.2 (on a 1 to 10 range), the next highest within the EU was Italy, which was ranked 31<sup>st</sup> with a raw score of 5.2. By way of further comparison, the next highest ranked EU nations were France and Portugal, both 25<sup>th</sup> with a raw score of 6.3. Indeed, Greece was ranked well below Namibia (28<sup>th</sup>) and Botswana (24<sup>th</sup>) and was much closer in raw score to the lowest ranked country (Bangladesh, 1.2) than the highest (Finland, 9.7) (TI 2002).

The academic literature on corruption in Greece has tended to reflect the claim that Greek society tends towards corruption and has also tended to argue that the cause is some pathological presence within Greece itself. Illustrative of these tendencies are the arguments by Kleomenis Koutsoukis. For Koutsoukis, Greece suffers from what he terms the ‘ideoteles institution of society’ (1993).<sup>2</sup> This ‘ideotelesness’ refers to the tendency of members of the society to act in ways that further their own interests at the expense of the public interest. This tendency, in turn, is best understood as the product of social underdevelopment and ‘imbalances’, from low levels of political socialization, to the inefficacies of the state or its lack of legitimacy, to the scarcities of material goods relative to social expectations (Koutsoukis 1993, 3-13). According to Koutsoukis:

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<sup>2</sup> This awkward term of ‘ideoteles institution of society’ is derived from the title of the book by Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. It is unclear why Koutsoukis chooses this term since he makes no arguments regarding how society is produced or ‘instituted’ (Castoriadis’s use of the term) but rather seems to use the term institution in the more common way, as an organization or arena within society. Moreover, the term seems to be of no utility since it is saying little more than that corruption occurs when people pursue their own interests at the expense of the public interest.

Thus an idioteles society seems to be a manifestation, for a large part of society, that an imbalance exists not only between rights and duties but between public and private interests and between individual and social, tradition and modernity as well (Koutsoukis 1993, 11).<sup>3</sup>

These arguments by Koutsoukis illustrate the deep seeded conviction that there is something pathological within Greek politics and culture and that the main task at hand is to identify this pathology and find an explanation for it by examining Greek society, by discovering those fissures and contradictions in Greece's ongoing movement from tradition to modernity.

Implicitly in TI's numbers and explicitly in arguments such as Koutsoukis's, the problem of corruption in Greece is seen as one caused by the Greeks themselves. The point of departure for the present paper is to reverse the gaze, to not look to Greece in order to discover the source of its 'corruption' problem. Rather, this paper looks from Greece outwards in order to uncover why it is that people judge Greece to be corrupt.<sup>4</sup> The paradoxical position of this paper is that the sources of the problem of corruption in Greece can not be found in Greece, they are to be found in the seemingly less corrupt states of the West (particularly the United States), in those concepts, rituals and myths that enable countless instances of private regarding within the public to be judged normal and acceptable and which shape our perceptions of Greek political life as being pathological. Although I do not doubt the presence of

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<sup>3</sup> The periodization of corruption in Greece can, according to Koutsoukis, be organized according to the underlying structural and developmental imbalances: first, 1946-1966, where the main culprit is clientelism and insufficient resources to meet the demands of the growing urban classes, second, 1967-1974, where the military junta's emphasis on investment and its desire to stay in power allowed for a marked rise in the power of wealthy individuals/potential investors, and finally, 1974 and onwards, where the new ethos of modernization and the corresponding expansion of the state apparatuses came into conflict with more traditional views and segments of Greek society, resulting in an authoritarian encroachment of the public sector into what had been private domains (Koutsoukis 1989, 3-7).

<sup>4</sup> It should be emphasized that the index produced by TI is of *perceptions* of corruption, how academics, businesspeople, and other 'experts', perceive the country in question.

clientelism or bribery in Greece, I do question why these things (and not many others) should be considered a corruption. For example, why is it that clientelism should be a corruption but not corporatism or interest group politics? The spontaneous understandings and categorizations that we hold in our heads and which lead us to characterize some phenomenon as a corruption and others as not are what this paper seeks to uncover.

This paper is organized into two parts, in the first part the specificity of what we understand as corruption is identified. In opposition to the dominant view that corruption is a problem that has plagued societies since antiquity, this paper will argue that there is a marked difference between traditional and modern understandings of corruption. It will be argued that what we understand as corruption only comes into being with modernity and the corresponding organization of social life and interests by way of the categories of the public and private. According to this view, the main function of the modern concept of corruption is to keep the categories of the public and private pure and believable, the homology between modern corruption rules and the rules regarding clean and unclean foods in Leviticus is demonstrated. Based upon these insights, examples are given from the United States and Australia in order to demonstrate how laws and procedures shape and define what we perceive as corruption and in order to illustrate the argument that the division between the corrupt and non-corrupt is exclusively on the level of perception. In the second part of this paper, the recent international focus on corruption is examined. Efforts such as those by TI and other organizations are examined in order to understand why it is now that such movements have arisen and why is it that the agents of finance and global commerce seem to be increasingly concerned with the question of corruption. The relationship between state forms and accumulation

strategies will be examined and it will be argued that, in addition to the function of keeping the categories of the public and private pure (a function of legitimation), the question of corruption in the context of globalization has also become a means of transforming state forms in ways that secure their relative autonomy, decrease the transaction costs for global investments, and allow for more predictable cost and benefit measures for potential investors. Lastly, I will discuss what all of this means for Greece and identify future lines of research for the question of Greece and corruption.

### **Part I: Legitimation**

What's breaking into a bank compared with founding a bank?  
- Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*

Defilement is never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in view of a systematic ordering of ideas. Hence any piecemeal interpretation of pollution rules of another culture is bound to fail. For the only way in which pollution ideas make sense is in reference to a total structure of thought whose key-stone, boundaries, margins and internal lines are held in relation by rituals of separation.  
- Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*

### **What is Political Corruption?**

Most all definitions of political corruption tend to emphasize the subversion of the public good by private interest. Among the more famous definitions of corruption, Joseph Nye has defined it as: “ ... behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or state gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence (Nye 1989, 966).” Similarly, Carl Friedrich has argued that:

Corruption is a kind of behavior which deviates from the norm actually prevalent or believed to prevail in a given context, such as the political. It is deviant behavior associated with a particular motivation, namely that of private gain at public expense. But whether this was the



motivation or not, it is the fact that private gain was secured at public expense that matters. Such private gain may be a monetary one, and in the minds of the general public it usually is, but it may take other forms (Friedrich 1989, 15).<sup>5</sup>

Contained within the modern understanding of corruption are two interrelated assumptions, that mutually exclusive public and private interests exist and that public servants must necessarily abstract themselves from the realm of the private in order to properly function.

The significance and relative historical novelty of this definition has been ignored in the contemporary literature on political corruption. The tendency has been to emphasize the continuity of the concept of political corruption from the ancient to modern times. Carl Friedrich has argued that the basic understanding of corruption as, "... a general disease of the body politic ... (Friedrich 1989, 18)," is common to the ancients and the moderns. John Noonan, having defined bribery, presumably the most obvious form of political corruption, as "... an inducement improperly influencing the performance of a public function ... (Noonan 1984, xi)," traces the concept back to roughly 3000 B.C. and claims that, although the concept has transformed over time, it has, in its main contours, remained constant.

Along the same lines, there are usually numerous references to Aristotle and Machiavelli when tracing the history of the concept of corruption. Aristotle is often cited for his assertion that political forms can be corrupted. In Aristotle's classification of the three kinds of constitution, he lists kingship, aristocracy, and

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<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the various ways that political corruption has been defined, see Heidenheimer, Johnston, and LeVine (1989). They argue that there are three ways that corruption has been defined: 'public office centered,' as a deviation from the requisites of public office, 'market centered,' as rent seeking activity by civil servants, and 'public interest centered,' as action that does damage to the public interest. All three of these forms of definition contain the idea that the public is subverted by the private.

polity.<sup>6</sup> He goes on to note that each can be corrupted. His discussion of kingship is particularly relevant because what constitutes the corruption of kinship into tyranny is the disregard the tyrant has for his subjects, he rules only to further his own ‘interests’ (cf. Aristotle 1958, 373-375). Machiavelli’s discussion of the function and causes of corruption are also often discussed, especially as he developed them in *The Discourses* regarding the decline of the republic of Rome (cf. Machiavelli 1970, esp. Book 1). Sara Shumer has noted that inclusive in Machiavelli’s discussion of corruption is the idea of the subversion of the public by the private:

One dimension of political corruption is the privatization both of the average citizen and those in office. In the corrupt state, men locate their values wholly within the private sphere and they use the public sphere to promote private interests (Shumer 1979, 9).

There are reasons to doubt this official history of corruption as a concept common to most all political forms and historical epochs. For one, the apparent lack of a word for bribery in Ancient Greek presents a problem for those who assume an unbroken line in the concept of corruption. Mark Philp notes that there are many words in Ancient Greek that make no distinction between a gift and a bribe (*doron*, *lemma*, *chresmasi peithein*) since, for the Greeks, to persuade through gift giving was acceptable and no perversion of judgement could be assumed (Philp 1997, 26). He makes the point that if the Greeks have no conception of bribery then this puts into question the whole idea of a public body in Ancient Greece:

If these were the only terms for bribery in the Ancient Greek world we would have to take the view that there is a basic untranslatability of the terms between us and them — that they not only failed to distinguish gifts and bribes, but that they also had no real concept of public office or trust (Philp 1997, 26).

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<sup>6</sup> Aristotle sometimes identifies four types of constitution, including oligarchy to the list above and replacing polity with democracy.

He is absolutely right. He goes on to argue, following Harvey (1985), that there was a term for bribery in Ancient Greece, *diaphtheirein*. However, in opposition to Philp's interpretation, it is not true that *diaphtheirein* has the same status as the modern term bribery or that it can be said to constitute a form of corruption in the modern sense. *Diaphtheirein* refers to the corruption of the mind in that the ability to make sound judgements and pursue the 'good' has been impaired and, more generally, to destruction and decay. All bribery is not corruption in the modern sense. A closer reading of Harvey's discussion of *diaphtheirein* reveals this point.<sup>7</sup> Harvey takes great pains to show that, in contrast to and concurrent with neutral and positive terms, there did indeed exist at least one negative term (*diaphtheirein*) for influencing through giving money and gifts. Nowhere, however, do we find any reference to 'public trust,' 'private interest' or any such category we usually use in discussing bribery and corruption. Bribery as *diapthora* was negative because it implied that the citizen, by way of accepting a bribe, was no longer able to properly act as a citizen since their will and power to judge had been destroyed. As Harvey puts it:

The man who takes a bribe surrenders his free will; what he says and does he does for another, and in that sense he no longer exists as an independent individual: he is a non-entity. That, I suggest, is the essential point (Harvey 1985, 86).

Rather than some 'public trust' succumbing to 'private interests', the recipient of a 'bribe' has lost the ability to be a citizen by relinquishing his autonomy. Like slaves, merchants, and women, all precluded from being citizens since they all lacked some

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<sup>7</sup> The more common version of the term is *diapthora*, the standard definition can be found in the Liddle-Scott Greek-English lexicon (available online at [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu)).

basic requisites for properly acting as a citizen, so the recipient of a bribe is incapable of the autonomous thought and moral judgement necessary for being a citizen.<sup>8</sup>

The categories of the public and the private are integral to the modern notion of corruption. Put simply, no corruption in the modern sense is possible if there is no public and private. As Philp's arguments above illustrate, much of the literature on corruption assumes that the apparently omnipresent existence of a concept of corruption is a sure sign that the public and private are also omnipresent social categories. That the ancient understanding of corruption is so far removed from the modern one puts this assumption into question.

Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* is a useful corrective to this ahistorical tendency in the corruption literature. For Kantorowicz, our modern understanding of public and private is tied to the rise in early modern England of the legal and political doctrine of the King's Two Bodies. This doctrine asserts that we have two bodies, a public and a private one. In its most developed form, the Two Bodies doctrine asserts that, on the one hand, we exist as concrete individuals with physical bodies, particular passions, interests, obligations, and so forth. On the other hand, we exist in an abstract sense, as members of the body politic, a body that is beyond our physical bodies and concrete social existence. This body politic is the polity, characterized by the common interests that bind its members together and is materialized in the rituals, personnel and institutions of the state (cf. Kantorowicz 1957, 193-272).

It should be noted that this version of public and private differs greatly from other typical uses of these categories within political thought; notably, the Arendtian

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Euben (1989) has equated the term *stasis*, not *diaphthora*, with political corruption. *Stasis* refers to the destruction and fracturing of the political community, and thus can easily be thought of as an instance of *diaphthora*. As with *diaphthora*, *stasis* does not imply any question of public-private transgression.

understanding of public and private, most clearly exemplified by Habermas' treatise on the public sphere. Habermas notes that the terms 'private' and 'public' first appear in German in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and argues that no such divisions between the private and public existed in feudal societies, he goes on to argue that they did exist in ancient societies and equates the ancient Greek terms of *polis* and *oikos* with public and private (cf. Habermas 1991, ch. 1). Thus, in this sense, the categories of the public and the private are mainly functional distinctions based on different uses of space. The public sphere becomes the space within which individuals can come together and discuss and formulate political opinions and positions. This is contrasted to the 'state' on the one hand with its police and legal functions, and to the 'private' side of civil society on the other hand with its family ties and market relations (cf. Habermas 1991, 30). Although not necessarily mutually exclusive, this functionalist understanding of what is public and private is not the public and private of corruption. In political corruption, private interests and passions come to displace the common good. It is not that 'public' spaces come to be used for non-political goals, for example, that makes for political corruption. Thus, although we often see the categories of public and private applied to most all societies, including the ancient world, it is usually done so in this more functionalist way and the categories themselves have little in common with the ways that the ancients understood and organized political life.<sup>9</sup>

In line with these observations, the categories of public and private that our modern concept of corruption presupposes are fairly recent. Even up to Machiavelli,

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<sup>9</sup> This brief discussion of the categories of the public and private is necessarily skipping over many important questions and debates. A much more extended discussion of these points is needed to demonstrate the full import and causes of this rise of the public/private split. Toward this end, and in addition to Kantorowicz, Norbert Elias' *The Civilizing Process*, particularly his discussions of how the king becomes transformed from a feudal lord into a 'public' functionary, is a seminal text.

in contrast to the argument by Schumer noted above, our modern concept of corruption seems to be lacking. In addition to the argument regarding the rise of the public and the private we also have the question of the rise of the concept of interests. As Albert Hirschman has argued, it is only in the modern era that the concept of interests emerges and this marks a radical break with pre-modern conceptions of the good. For Hirschman it is the increasing dominance of finance and money that explains the change in the term ‘interest’ from being simply a financial term to a concept that is central to our understanding and organization of contemporary politics (cf. Hirschman 1977).<sup>10</sup> It is in this context that Hirschman sheds light on the question of Machiavelli’s notion of corruption and notes how the term corruption went through a similar transformation in meaning as interest:

“Corruption” has a similar semantic trajectory. In the writings of Machiavelli, who took the term from Polybius, *corruzione* stood for deterioration in the quality of government, no matter for what reason it may occur. The term was still used with this inclusive meaning in eighteenth-century England, although it became also identified with bribery at that time. Eventually the monetary meaning drove the nonmonetary one out almost completely (Hirschman 1977, 40).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Marcel Mauss’ *The Gift* is also relevant to this question. “The very word ‘interest’ is itself recent, originally an accounting technique: the Latin word *interest* was written on account books against the sums of interest that had to be collected. In ancient systems of morality of the most epicurean kind it is the good and pleasurable that is sought after, and not material utility. The victory of rationalism and mercantilism was needed before the notions of profit and the individual, raised to the level of principles, were introduced. One can almost date — since Mandeville’s *The Fable of the Bees* — the triumph of the notion of individual interest. Only with great difficulty and the use of periphrasis can these two words be translated into Latin, Greek, or Arabic (Mauss 1990, 76).” See also Louis Dumont (1977) on the rise of these ideas.

<sup>11</sup> The question of corruption is particularly confusing in the case of Machiavelli because already present in his work is the public/private split and the question of interests, as when he states that “So the senators sent two ambassadors to beg him to set aside private enmities, and in the public interest to make the nomination (Machiavelli 1970, 523).” In this context, it is easy to accept Schumer’s argument that the subversion of the public by the private is one dimension of corruption for Machiavelli. But, even if we accept this argument, Hirschman is still correct in his assessment and the concept of corruption found in Machiavelli is still very much traditional because private interests in this context function as bribery did in the earlier example, as something that decreases virtue. Thus, private interests are bad *in*

The Greek term of *diaphthora* and the Latin term of *corruzione*, in spite of their usual translation as corruption, refer to an understanding of corruption that is quite foreign to our modern one. Political corruption is an exclusively modern phenomenon made possible only after the rise of the public/private split and the concept of interests. While it may be quite impossible, and not particularly important from the perspective of the present work, to provide some specific date or event that signals the moment that our modern concept of corruption emerges, it is appropriate to locate it within the general processes of modernity and claim that our understanding of corruption becomes possible and thinkable as capitalism and the state emerge and become dominant.<sup>12</sup>

### Why Corruption?

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*themselves* and corruption is not simply the improper presence of private interests within the public. For example, the idea Schumer puts forth that average citizens are corrupted by their privatization is completely unthinkable from the point of view of the modern understanding of corruption. It does not make sense in the modern context to say, for example, that voters are corrupt because they vote according to their private interests. In fact, it is never possible to say that ‘private’ citizens are ever corrupt in the modern sense of the term (although they can certainly be corrupting, as when they tempt public officials with bribes and favors). This difference between the traditional and the modern understanding of corruption is further examined in the next section.

<sup>12</sup> Given that the modern concept of corruption becomes thinkable at any point after the rise of the public/private split, it seems possible, in opposition to both Mauss and Hirschman, that the modern use of the term occurs well before either Mandeville (Mauss’ argument; *The Fable of the Bees* was published in 1714 with the very revealing subtitle *Private Vices, Publick Benefits*) or the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hirschman’s argument). For example, Francis Bacon was convicted of political corruption *qua* bribery in 1621. He famously confessed, “I am guilty of corruption and do renounce all defense.” Given the dominance of the Two Bodies doctrine in Elizabethan England and the relative novelty of convicting a judge for bribery (at that time, it was common for judges to receive gifts from winning parties) it seems very likely that already with Bacon we have the use of the term of corruption in the modern sense. The important point here is that the rise of the modern concept of corruption should not be thought of as an event but, rather, as a process that begins with the rise of the Two Bodies doctrine and becomes fully realized by the time of the bourgeois revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

To note the novelty of the modern concept of political corruption and to note the basic preconditions of its existence begs the question of why the term corruption came to represent the idea of the subversion of the public interest by private interests. This is even more the case when one notes deeper differences in meaning between the two concepts of corruption. In the traditional understanding of corruption, there was a strong imagery of decay and regression, of something becoming less and less capable, potent or virtuous. The idea that through disease, old age, the influence of vice, or any other reason, the ability to seek the good and virtuous is decreased/destroyed. Here, we have the corruption of the mind, morals and the will. The term still retains this meaning today, we completely understand the use of the term in the claim, for example, that the youth of Athens were corrupted by Socrates and we use the term in essentially the same way when we claim that the minds of the young are corrupted by the entertainment industry or that the ability to make sound decisions is corrupted by religious cults, various psychological disorders, and so on. What is interesting here is that there is a clear division of good and bad, vice is never good nor is disease or psychosis.

By contrast, in the modern understanding of corruption there is not a division based on something that in itself is good and desirable and something that is not. Private interests are not bad. Quite the opposite, the whole line of questioning from Weber's *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* to Hirschman's *The Passions and the Interests* has been focused on explaining how private interests, particularly in the economic sense, came to be welcomed as something positive. How then can two things, public and private interests, that are in themselves seen as proper and good come to constitute something that is bad and improper? Mary Douglas does much to answer this question when she notes that notions of purity and



cleanliness have nothing to do with something that in itself is dirty. For Douglas, dirt is best understood as something that is out of place:

Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom, or food bespattered on clothing; similarly, bathroom equipment in the drawing room; clothes lying on chairs; outdoor things in-doors; upstairs things downstairs; under-clothing appearing where over-clothing should be, and so on. In short, our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse cherished classifications (Douglas 1966, 36-37).

Private interests and public interests are both perfectly fine, as long as they stay in their proper places. Once we have the contamination of the public by the private, politicians and politics itself become dirty, tainted, infected, and thus corrupt. The opposite is equally true, once we have an invasion of the private by the public (for example, public authorities being able to regulate ‘private’ behaviors such as sexual, religious, and so forth) we come to equally negative conclusions regarding the transgression of the categorical separation of private and public. The modern notion of political corruption is thus much closer to the idea of corruption as adulteration rather than as deterioration and destruction. This idea of political corruption is consistent with the use of corruption to describe the loss of the purity of one substance by the introduction of another, the way that wine can be corrupted by water or a flowerbed can be corrupted by weeds.

To further emphasize these differences in meaning, let us take as an illustrative example the likely possibility that Ronald Reagan had Alzheimer’s disease in the later years of his presidency. Assuming that it had progressed to the point of hindering his ability to make sound decisions, this would constitute corruption in the classical sense in the same way that bribery constituted corruption — his capacity to think and act in an autonomous and rational way was diminished. It is obviously not corruption in the modern sense since there is no instance of the contamination of the

public interest by private interests. The Clinton coffee scandals, where prospective campaign contributors were invited to coffees at the White House, are an example of the opposite. It is hard to imagine that drinking coffee could ever result in corruption in the traditional sense (unless one became so addicted to it that the ability to reason was lost, one had to resort to crime in order to support the consumption of coffee, and so forth) but it can easily result in corruption in the modern sense. If that coffee is being consumed by prospective campaign contributors in a ‘public’ area, say the non-residential areas of the White House, it can be said to constitute political corruption because the President is allowing his private interests to contaminate the purity of the public space. This space within the White House is not ‘public’ simply because it is owned by ‘the public’ but rather because it is there for his use as a public servant and not as a private citizen. If coffee is being consumed and contributions being sought in space that is recognized as there for the President’s use as a private individual, no corruption is present. The same people, the same coffee, the same money changing hands, the only difference being what room it is occurring within is all the difference between corruption and non-corruption.<sup>13</sup>

In light of these stark differences, how is it possible that the modern and traditional ideas of corruption are so easily conflated and confused? Although the meanings are very different, both understandings of political corruption attempt to establish a normative distinction between what is desirable and what is not. In the traditional understanding of political corruption, the characteristics of a citizen, king,

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<sup>13</sup> Note the similarity of this understanding of corruption with the claim of Bin Laden et. al. that the presence of Westerners in the Middle-East is a corruption of the sacred spaces of Islam. There is nothing ‘bad’ or ‘evil’ about Americans as such, the problem is that they are out of place. The same logic was used by German fascists, the basic political problem is that things are out of place and the political project of Nazism is to return things to their ‘proper’ order. The problem for the Jews and Gypsies is that there is no ‘proper’ space to return them to, thus they are always a corruption. The only ‘solution’ is to eliminate them altogether.

or regime as they *should* be are established and contrasted with those characteristics that are seen as bad/undesirable from the point of view of that desired reality. In the modern understanding, a strict division of the public and private is asserted and various phenomena that may conflict with that presumed division are termed a corruption. This difference between what should be and keeping things in their 'proper' place is immensely significant. On the one hand we have a normative political project that posits what the good is and on this basis is able to establish what is corrupt/bad. On the other hand we have the desirable/undesirable distinction established in a more technocratic and underhanded way. The proper ordering of all things social is posited in the form of ontological assumptions regarding the public/private and phenomenon that pose a challenge to this vision of how things are become branded as corrupt.

Since the modern concept of corruption does not function as an explicitly normative construct but rather as an articulation of categories of bourgeois political ontology, it has the effect of constituting and reaffirming the dominant public/private split through its application and subsequent categorization of phenomena as corrupt or uncorrupt, as normal and pathological. In so doing, the normative dimension of the modern concept of corruption becomes manifest precisely because of its way of categorizing social phenomena. By establishing the division between the normal and pathological in the public/private split, the modern understanding of political corruption is at once making a statement of fact and presenting us with the political goal of fully realizing the 'normal'. As Georges Canguilhem notes in his discussion of the foundations of the concept of the normal:

In the discussion of these meanings [of normal] it has been pointed out how ambiguous this term is since it designates at once a fact and "a value attributed to this fact by the person speaking, by virtue of an evaluative judgement for which he takes responsibility." One should

also stress how this ambiguity is deepened by the realist philosophical tradition which holds that, as every generality is the sign of an essence, and every perfection the realization of the essence, a generality observable in fact takes the value of realized perfection, and a common characteristic, the value of an ideal type (Canguilhem 1991, 125).

In this way, the modern concept of corruption repeats the normative/political emphasis of the traditional understanding of political corruption but does so in an essentialist and apolitical way. The confusion of the two concepts of political corruption thus appears to be, at least partly, a result of the similar normative function of situating what is politically desirable and what is not. But, none the less, already built into the modern concept of corruption is an ahistorical and acritical understanding of political phenomena that takes the integrity of the public/private split at face value, as a quality immanent in all societies, as the normal. For this reason, it is rare that the historical specificity and social embeddedness of the concept of political corruption becomes visible to observers. Similarly, by conflating the two concepts of corruption, the reception of the modern concept of corruption reifies it back throughout history and gives the public/private split the appearance of the eternal.

Characteristically, most contemporary discussions of political corruption within political science occur within the sub-field of comparative politics, not normative political theory. Under the guise of discussions on clientelism, patronage, totalitarianism, civil society, and so forth, comparative politics has spent much of its time demonstrating the normalcy of the United States and other advanced capitalist societies by demonstrating the pathologies of 'less developed' nations.<sup>14</sup> Very much

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<sup>14</sup> In addition to most all the contributions in what is undoubtedly the best known and most authoritative collection of readings on the subject, Heidenheimer et. al.'s *Political Corruption: A Handbook* (1989), there are hundreds of essays in this tradition to be found in the many mainstream journals that cater to area studies and comparative politics, particularly in reference to Asia, South America, Africa, and

in line with the comments by Canguilhem quoted above and already illustrated in the introductory discussion of TI and Koutsoukis, an omnipresent assumption in this literature is that the public and private are essential attributes of human societies; that political development and advancement entail the realization of this fact and the formation of institutions, laws, and attitudes that end the systematic corruption prevalent in these under-developed societies. The following quote from Jacob van Klaveren is typical:

We know that the political systems of the so-called underdeveloped regions still remain in the stage of systematic corruption, and there are good reasons for this which we cannot go into here. For simplicity's sake, let us say that the Age of Enlightenment has not yet, in a relative sense, occurred there, which is not too surprising considering the low educational level (van Klaveren 1989, 557).<sup>15</sup>

In a different context, even a political commentator as astute as Hannah Arendt argues that totalitarianism is characterized by the effacement of the public-private distinction (cf. Arendt 1968). Totalitarianism then is a corruption of the separation of the public and private, a pathological negation of the separation of the public from the private, and it is certainly less desirable than the normal articulation of the public/private split

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Eastern and Southern Europe. In this context, Greece has consistently been presented as the most pathological and backwards of all non-(ex)communist European states. To a significant degree, the cultural and geographic proximity of Greece to the 'east' is often seen as the main culprit. Even today, when the many racist pitfalls and the mechanistic and formalistic tendencies of these modernization theory type arguments are well known, some contemporary Greek commentators continue to use the dualistic categories of modern/traditional in order to explain the paradoxes of Greek politics. Notably, Nikiforos Diamandouros (2000) has recently attempted to explain the peculiar trajectory of Greek politics by arguing that a cultural dualism (East/West – traditional/modern) has plagued Greek society.

<sup>15</sup> Most all commentators on political corruption, including van Klaveren, would readily admit that corruption occurs even in liberal capitalist societies, the main question is whether it exists as a transgression of accepted rules and institutional norms or whether it exists in a systemic way. Similarly, the question is often presented as one of frequency, corruption exists everywhere but there are pathological elements in underdeveloped societies that result in it being much more common there than in the developed world, "Corruption obviously exists in all societies, but it is also obviously more common in some societies than in others and more common at some times in the evolution of a society than at other times (Huntington 1989, 377)."

in liberal societies. In this respect, Arendt is no more capable of going beyond the essentialist bourgeois conception of the public and private than are mainstream social scientists and their theories of modernization and development.

### **Rules of Separation: From Leviticus to Washington D.C.**

The writings and categorizations of academics, however, are not the cause of the division between what is considered a normal and a pathological ordering of the public and private. The academic categories are no more than reflections of the categories and normative precepts prevalent in bourgeois societies themselves. As such, what we must understand is how bourgeois societies come to form and regulate their conception of normalcy regarding the public/private split.

As Canguilhem first argued in *The Normal and the Pathological*, and as Foucault demonstrated in his various histories of the practices of normalization (especially *Madness and Civilization*), the question is not simply one of how the normal is constituted but how the normal is constituted by way of the production of the pathological. The ‘normal’ in the case of corruption, just as it is in the case of physiological diseases and mental disorders, is largely a negative category, normal is that which is not pathological. And how do we know what is pathological? There are rules that inform us of what is pathological. The term normal itself derives from the Latin term *norma*, rule. The normal is that which conforms to the rule. Conforming to the rule when it comes to political corruption thus refers to *not* transgressing the rules that regulate the purity of the public and private. If breaking these rules is constitutive of the pathological, corruption, then following the rules can be nothing but the normal, good and desirable. If we are to understand how the normal is constituted, we must be able to identify those rules that define the pathological and upon whose presence the presumed purity of the public depends.

Mary Douglas' analysis of rules of separation is a useful point of departure for such an analysis. As already noted above, Douglas argues that societies will tend to declare 'any object or idea likely to confuse cherished classifications' as impure/dirty/corrupt. These classifications, in turn, are themselves dependant upon a conceptual edifice 'whose key-stone, boundaries, margins and internal lines are held in relation by rituals of separation.' Most interesting in terms of its implications towards the analytical task at hand is how Douglas applies these principles in her explanation of the various rules regarding clean and unclean food in Leviticus. Douglas attempts to solve what has long been considered a puzzle by biblical scholars, how to explain why some animals are considered unclean and others clean:

Why should the camel, the hare, and the rock badger be unclean? Why should some locusts, but not all, be unclean? Why should the frog be clean and the mouse and the hippopotamus unclean? What have chameleons, moles and crocodiles got in common that they should be listed together (Douglas 1966, 42)?<sup>16</sup>

As Douglas notes, there have tended to be two ways of addressing this problem, that these rules are arbitrary, irrational and unexplainable or that they largely serve educational and disciplinary functions — such as the teaching of self discipline by selecting the most tasty and tempting of creatures as unclean, selecting those animals that were most likely to harm health and carry disease, or as rules developed to protect Jewish culture from the encroachment of neighbouring cultures (Douglas 1966, 30-33 and 44-50). Having identified the contradictions and inconsistencies in all of these attempts to explain the rules, Douglas attempts a new explanation by treating these various rules as exactly what they purport to be, rules of separation. Douglas notes

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<sup>16</sup> Douglas, mistakenly, assumes that frogs are clean because they are not listed by name in the relevant sections of Leviticus. She explains this apparent anomaly of a lizard being clean as a result of frogs having four feet and jumping (as opposed to other lizards, which do not have four feet and swarm and creep). That frogs, despite their four feet and hopping, are unclean can easily be explained by their amphibious nature.

that the traditional idea of the 'holy' was quite literal, it referred to wholeness, completeness, purity of form (Douglas 1966, 51-53). Thus, for example, animals appropriate for sacrifice had to be complete and pure, free from physical imperfections and blemishes. Similarly, for 'wholeness' and 'completeness' to be realized, the organization of the world has to be kept pure. In accordance of this meaning of holy, we find injunctions against sowing the same field with more than one kind of seed, against plant and animal hybrids, against making cloth by combining two or more kinds of fibers, against bestiality, and so forth. To be heterodox and confusing is unholy, things should be kept in their proper order and not mixed.<sup>17</sup>

Clean and unclean foods then have nothing to do with how appetizing or ugly or healthy or sloppy the animals are but, rather, how pure they are in terms of conforming to their classification. The animals true to life in the sky are birds, they have feathers, two feet and fly. All those birds that do not fly are unclean since they defy these principles as do all those things that fly but are not birds. The animals true to life in the water are fish with scales and fins, all those creatures in the water that do not have these characteristics are unclean. Animals who roam the earth are four-footed and move by walking, jumping or hopping. Those animals who seem to have two feet and two hands, like crocodiles, mice, and weasels, are unclean. All that swarms is unclean since that mode of propulsion is proper to neither sky, land or water. Thus, worms, snakes, and the like are unclean. Some kinds of locusts are clean because they hop, if they fly they have an attribute that only birds can properly have. Proper mammals have cloven feet and chew the cud. So, camels, pigs, badgers, and hares all lack one or both of these qualifications. Members of the antelope

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<sup>17</sup> The common dictum 'cleanliness is next to godliness,' apparently derived from an old Hebrew proverb, makes sense in this context.



family, sheep and goats, cows, and so on, do conform to these rules so they are clean (cf. Douglas 1966, 56-58).

This example that Douglas provides us with is important for its illustration of the idea of cleanliness as keeping things in their proper place. Moreover, she provides us with a model for interpreting other sets of rules of separation. The task of interpreting rules of separation when it comes to political corruption seems somewhat different than interpreting Leviticus because we already know what the basic idea behind the rules against political corruption is, to keep private interests from contaminating the public good. So, while Douglas' interpretation of Leviticus is compelling in its elegance and in its ability to explain all the seemingly anomalous classifications of clean/unclean, it would appear that it would not be of much utility for the question of examining rules regarding political corruption. This would be a false conclusion because we only know the general principle behind keeping the public/private divisions separate and clean. Why, for example, is it ok for a U.S. congressperson to go on a 7 day trip that is paid for by a lobbyist but not 8 days? Why is clientelism corruption and passing laws that benefit campaign supporters and contributors usually not? Why are staff members allowed to lobby the congressional representatives they worked for after one year and not four or five years, or never, or right away? The reality is that, with one partial exception, there has never in the history of the modern state been a law against political corruption as such. There are only laws against particular examples of what could be classified as political corruption: bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and so forth. So, although there is no need to deduce the general principle regarding political corruption there is a need to examine the rules designed to maintain the purity and separation of the public and

private if we are to be able to deduce the ideas behind what bourgeois societies understand to be corruption and what they do not.

In order to make the subsequent discussion easier to follow, a very partial list of ethics rules from the U.S. House of Representative follows. The rules are divided according to the kind of activity they refer to and the wording of each rule is exactly as it appears in a summary memo of ethics rules that is given to all members, officials and employees of the House of Representatives (Committee on Standards of Official Conduct 2001).

The House Gift Rule prohibits acceptance of any gift unless permitted by one of the exceptions stated in the rule. Gifts allowed by the exceptions include:

- Any gift (other than cash or cash equivalent) valued at less than \$50; however, the cumulative value of gifts that can be accepted from any one source in a calendar year is less than \$100,
- Gifts from relatives, and gifts from other Members or employees,
- Gifts based on personal friendship (but a gift over \$250 in value may not be accepted unless a written determination is obtained from Standards Committee),
- Personal hospitality in a private home (except from a registered lobbyist),
- Anything paid for by federal, state, or local government.

Members and staff may never solicit a gift, or accept a gift that is linked to any action that they have taken or are being asked to take.

Private payment of necessary food, transportation and lodging expenses may be accepted from a qualified private sponsor for travel to a meeting, speaking engagement, or fact-finding event in connection with official duties.

Limit on number of days at the expense of the trip sponsor:

- 4 days, including travel time, for domestic travel.
- 7 days, excluding travel time, for foreign travel.

No use of congressional office resources (including equipment, supplies or files) for campaign purposes.

No solicitation of political contributions from or in any congressional office.

Don't accept any contribution that is linked to any official action, past or prospective.

No personal use or borrowing of campaign funds, and no use for official House purposes.

Avoid mixing of House and private resources.

Official position and confidential information may not be used for personal gain.

A Member must abstain from voting on a question only if the Member has a direct personal or pecuniary interest in the question.

Outside Earned Income Limit for Calendar Year 2001 - \$21,765.

For ONE YEAR after leaving office:

— A Member may not communicate with or appear before a Member, officer or employee of either House of Congress, or any Legislative Branch office, with intent to influence official action on behalf of anyone else.

— Very Senior Staff may not communicate with or appear before the individual's former employer or office with intent to influence official action on behalf of anyone else.

We find all the important components of the concept of corruption that have been already identified and discussed present in these rules. The Two Bodies principle is present in those rules that distinguish between the person as a public servant and as a private citizen. Gifts from family, other members of the congress, close friends and anything paid for by public funds are allowed (since in all these exchanges it is either a private-to-private or public-to-public relationship). Hospitality in a private home is allowed as long as that person is not a registered lobbyist (thus negating the distinction of a 'private' home). Members must abstain from voting on and lobbying for issues they have private interests in. Similarly, omnipresent in these rules is the general prohibition against mixing the public and private. All of the rules are manifestations of this principle, the suggestion to "avoid mixing of House and private resources" seems clear enough. In this way, the main contours of these rules clearly conform to the dual conceptual principles of Two Bodies and of corruption as a mixing of categories.

An interesting grey area is the position of the political candidate. When it comes to incumbent members of the House, their reelection campaigns are clearly not on the 'public' side of the equation, Congressional staff and resources are not to be

used for campaign purposes. No campaign activity, including soliciting contributions, is to take place in any congressional rooms or offices. Even informational mailings to constituents are not allowed 90 days prior to a primary or general election since it would be quite impossible to distinguish between the member sending the mailing as a public servant or as a candidate. Conversely, campaign contributions cannot be used for public or for private purposes. It would seem that candidates for office and campaign contributions are neither public nor private, it is an interesting in-between situation, it is a position that is inherently heterodox and 'unclean' by its own nature (perhaps equal to larva who, as swarming creatures, are unclean but, once they transform into walking/hopping insects, become perfectly clean). It may be normal to be a private citizen, it may be normal to be a public servant, to be a candidate is to be neither and, thus, the conceptual position of the candidate must be kept as separate as possible from the usual registers of public and private so as not to create any confusions.

This interesting in-between case aside, the greatest challenge to interpreting these rules of separation is being able to explain, first, all those possible forms of corruption against which there are no rules and, second, all those rules that appear to be arbitrary or, at least, could easily be different and still conform to the general principles. Why should the limit for allowable gifts be set at \$50 and not higher or lower? If it were \$60 or \$100 or \$10, would it not still fulfil the same function and would not the principles behind the rule remain the same? Similarly, how can we interpret some of the more general and loose rules, such as the prohibition against using one's official position for personal gain?

If anything can be gleaned from Douglas' analysis of Leviticus it is that rules of separation are synonymous with the system of ideas, one constitutes the other.

There can be no classification of clean and unclean without the rules of separation and no rules without classifications. In this sense, the reason the gift limit is \$50 is so that there is a limit, so that there is a rule of separation. Of course, this is not to say that the dollar amount is random or that it could be any amount and still retain its practical function but the first part to understanding this rule is to understand why there is a need to place a dollar amount as a limit in the first place. Because of the \$50 rule, not simply some general principle of public/private separation, we can now identify what conforms to the rule and what does not, we can now identify the normal and pathological when it comes to accepting gifts. In the same way, the general decrees that public office cannot be used for private gain or that gifts and contributions can never be linked to actions that have been taken or that will be taken are utterly meaningless and have no significance. Why else would a non-relative/friend give a gift to a member of the House or provide a campaign contribution if not as some form of support for an action that was taken or they hope will be taken? It is precisely because everyone knows this to be true that limits are established and the rules of separation are made specific.<sup>18</sup> We find examples of this principle throughout the rules. We know that everyone is potentially a lobbyist so, in order to establish a clear distinction, the categorization ‘lobbyist’ is made a technical term referring to those who are legally registered as such. We know that any number of actions while in office could result in private gain (indeed, just being in office will result in untold numbers of corporations and law firms being willing to pay significant amounts of money to employ these same individuals once they leave office), so we have a multitude of specific rules that tell us what constitutes private gain and what does not.

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<sup>18</sup> Obviously, this general prohibition against linking gifts to past or future actions simply requires that the exchange not be explicitly linked to actions, giving a gift or contribution is fine as long as it is not presented as an exchange for some action.

What political corruption is cannot be known without recourse to these rules of separation.

That the limit to gifts should be \$50, that privately sponsored travel has 4 and 7 day limits, that additional earned income is limited to \$21,765, all have another foundation as well. The dollar limit to gifts could have been set at \$1000 and the basic principle of there being a specific rule by which to determine what is normal and pathological would be sustained. However, it would be more difficult to justify that a gift of that magnitude would not constitute a corruption of the public interest in the eyes of citizens. Obviously, the more the value of a gift the less believable it is that the person receiving the 'gift' was not influenced by it. It may be quite likely that the gift limit could be \$100 or that the additional earned income level could be \$40,000 and it would be just as believable and efficient as the existing amounts, but the point is that the specific limits in each rule correspond to some basic parameters regarding how such actions are likely to be perceived. A basic principle that underpins much of the content of these rules is that public servants must not engage in behaviors that are too overt and obvious in their illustration of how the concrete 'private' body of the public servant conflicts with the presumed purity and objectivity of their abstract 'public' body. If former employees and advisors are to lobby you on behalf of an interest group, they should at least wait a year, it looks better. If you do take a trip paid for by private money, don't let it go beyond four days, it doesn't look good. Maybe it is true that elected public servants will tend to act on behalf of important supporters and campaign contributors, but at least don't make it too obvious.

The investigation into the violation of many of the rules listed above by Representative 'Bud' Shuster illustrates this principle. Shuster, chairman of the

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, became the object of an official investigation by the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (CSOC) largely as a result of the apparent collusion between himself and his former chief of staff, who had worked for him for twenty two years, Ann Eppard (cf. CSOC 2000a). Eppard, after resigning her post, established her own lobbying firm and lobbied Shuster on behalf of her clients during and after the twelve month period following her resignation. As already noted, senior house staff are not allowed to lobby their former employers for twelve months following the end of their employment. The official report notes that this restriction, enacted in 1989, was intended “... *to diminish any appearance that Government decisions might be affected by the improper use by an individual of his former senior position* (italics in original, CSOC 2000a, 8).”

Shuster and Eppard proved to be pretty inept at keeping up appearances. Not only was Eppard the former chief of staff, she was also, while she was lobbying Shuster, the assistant treasurer for Shuster’s reelection campaign and a significant fundraiser (in itself, it is perfectly legal to be a lobbyist and a campaign officer or fundraiser — it simply must not *appear* to be something that is done in exchange for some favor). Shortly after Eppard began to represent Frito-Lay and Federal Express, Shuster pushed through the Congress the granting of a waiver from many federal safety regulations for mid-sized delivery trucks (such as those used by both companies), “... a quiet lobbying campaign aimed at the House Transportation Committee yielded in a few months what years of regulatory struggles had not (CSOC 2000a, 79).” After Eppard was hired by Amtrak, Shuster championed a bill that provided Amtrak with money and financial restructuring, exactly what Amtrak had hired Eppard to accomplish. After Eppard was hired by the Outdoor Advertising Association of America, Shuster argued on behalf of and legislation was eventually

passed that allows more billboards to be placed along routes designated as scenic byways (cf. CSOC 2000a, 79-82). There are a great many additional potential rules infractions investigated by the CSOC including a trip by Shuster to Puerto Rico paid for by one of Eppard's clients and frequent stays by Shuster at Eppard's home and his frequent use of her car.

It should be noted that the CSOC found Shuster to not be guilty of any infractions when it came to the three legislative cases noted above. Although he was found to have violated the letter of the law when it came to the twelve month rule and gift rules, as well as being guilty of some bad campaign finance accounting and a few other minor infractions, all the infractions boil down to the violation of one rule, literally rule #1, clause I of the Code of Official Conduct, "a Member, officer, or employee of the House of Representatives shall conduct himself at all times in a manner which shall reflect creditably on the House of Representatives." What Shuster was ultimately found guilty of is not being a good enough actor when it comes to maintaining the illusion of the public. The Letter of Reproval issued to Shuster by the CSOC reads like a mantra to clause I, it begins by noting "By your actions you have brought discredit to the House of Representative" and goes on to establishing why each infraction constitutes a violation of clause I:

The first area of misconduct, constituting conduct that did not reflect creditably on the House of Representatives ... The third area of misconduct to which you admitted, and which constitutes conduct by you that did not reflect creditably on the House of Representatives ... The fifth area of misconduct to which you have admitted, and which constitutes conduct that did not reflect creditably on the House of Representatives ... (CSOC 2000b).

The letter concludes with the following statement:

In our free and democratic system of republican government, it is vital that citizens feel confidence in the integrity of the legislative institutions that make the laws that govern America. Ultimately,



individual Members of Congress can undermine respect for the institutions of our government ... (CSOC 2000b).

The purity of the public is specular and illusionary, a performative gesture, a product of a series of rules designed to cloak the fetishistic nature of the public/private split. In Leviticus, the division between the clean and unclean was such that by following the rules of separation one could completely realize the conceptual goal of wholeness as it was understood at the time. In Washington D.C., the fetishistic nature of the public makes it impossible to fully realize the separation of the public and private in terms of the actual content of politics. The legal fiction, as Kantorowicz terms it, of the abstract body of the public is materialized and regulated through the rules of separation in that what is kept pure is not politics itself but, rather, its categorizations and self-presentations. Given the impossibility of removing 'private interests' from either the real bodies of public servants or from the actual substance of bourgeois politics, a series of rules and practices are instituted in order to purge the realm of appearances from acts that challenge the categorization of society as divided into two mutually exclusive registers, the public and private. The success of these rules of separation thus rely upon two interrelated principles, to regulate and cloak or eliminate all those activities that are likely to be perceived by citizens as a presence of private regarding within the public body and to structure the parameters and boundaries of what citizens are likely to perceive as corruption simply by serving as the point of reference for establishing what constitutes the normal and pathological in such matters.

That the rules discussed above do not include a great many potential corruptions of the public by the private can only be interpreted as a sign that they fall within the 'normal' side of the equation. It could easily be argued that members of the Congress are corrupt when they vote according to the private interests of

constituents in their districts, or that a President is corrupt when he appoints his friends to public office, and so forth. We find nothing against these types of activities in the existing rules of separation although in both cases it could be a violation of the rules if appearances are not maintained.<sup>19</sup> The pragmatic requisites of bourgeois politics necessitate that private interests be everywhere within the ‘public’ but that everyone categorize these short-circuits as being normal and desirable.

In this respect, the rules of separation found in Leviticus and those found in Washington D.C. are not based on some really existing truth in nature or society but are attempts to formalize and ritualize the meanings and categorizations through which society maps its understandings and perceptions. The attempt to explain the rules of separation by reference to the ‘real’ dirtiness imminent in the object or activity itself is thus necessarily bound to failure. Crabs and oysters are no more ‘dirty’, from the perspective of nutrition or biology, than are salmon and tuna. Clientelism is no more ‘dirty’, from the perspective of the nature of the interests it articulates, than are pluralist interest group arrangements. Again, to go back to Douglas, it is only in reference to the system of ideas that these rules make sense and their object is nothing more than the material constitution and reproduction of the system of ideas.

### **The Australian Case: Fetishism Revealed**

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<sup>19</sup> Such as with the savings and loan scandals of the late 1980's, it is almost always acceptable for members of the Congress to lend support to business interests but when it appears as being ‘too much’ support, whatever that may be judged to be, it can be said to violate the rules of separation precisely because people judge it as ‘too much’, because it does not ‘reflect creditably’ on the state apparatuses. When it comes to having supported savings and loans that failed and cost taxpayers billions of dollars, it appears the threshold for what constitutes ‘too much’ is lower than usual. In this respect, it may very well be the case that the only reason Shuster was investigated and reproved by the CSOC is because the *Journal of Commerce* published an article raising suspicions about Shuster’s activities and because he was also the object of an investigation by the *60 Minutes* television program.

That political corruption as such has never been completely outlawed in modern societies thus makes perfect sense because the whole point of the discourse and practices surrounding corruption has been to make most cases of private regarding within the public acceptable and normal by identifying only the some forms of private regarding as 'corrupt'. If ever there was to be a general rule that no private interests are allowed in the public arena, politics as we know it would be impossible and every public servant would potentially be guilty of some version of corruption. A fascinating exception to this general principle of rules of separation necessarily being specific and partial so as to legitimize all those typical forms of private regarding is the Australian attempt to eliminate political corruption. The Australians have come the closest of all to outlawing political corruption in its most general sense and their misadventures allow us to see how the conceptual edifice of the capitalist state may unravel when it is faced with a literal prohibition of private regarding within its institutions.

In the wake of a series of corruption scandals in the 1980's, various Australian states adopted legislation designed to combat political corruption. In 1989, corruption commissions were established in three Australian states: the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in New South Wales, the Official Corruption Commission (OCC) in Western Australia, and the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) in Queensland. What is fascinating in these cases is the degree to which not only particular types of political corruption are made illegal but how these commissions attempted to outlaw political corruption as such.

We find in the ICAC Act a general prohibition on 'corrupt conduct' in unusually broad terms and in ways that come very close to the general understanding

of corruption as any mixing of the public and private. For the ICAC, corrupt conduct is:

(a) any conduct of any person (whether or not a public official) that adversely affects, or that could adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, the honest or impartial exercise of official functions by any public official, any group of public officials; or

(b) any conduct of a public official that constitutes or involves the dishonest or partial exercise of any of his or her official functions; or

(c) any conduct of a public official or former public official that constitutes or involves a breach of public trust; or

(d) any conduct of a public official or former public official that involves the misuse of information or material that he or she has acquired in the course of his or her official functions, whether or not for his or her benefit or for the benefit of any other person (Commission on Government [COG] 1995, 237-238).

Rather than use the term ‘corrupt conduct’, the CJC uses the term ‘official misconduct’ but defines it almost exactly the same way (cf. COG 1995, 241-242).

The OCC rules are also very similar and include the distinction between ‘corrupt conduct’ (in effect, all conduct by public officials that violates the criminal code) and ‘improper conduct’ (conduct that is defined exactly the way the ICAC defines ‘corrupt conduct’ and the CJC defines ‘official misconduct’) (COG 1995, 45-46).

Whether it is termed ‘corrupt conduct’, ‘official misconduct’ or ‘improper conduct’, the Australians have attempted to outlaw any breach of objectivity, any impure action/non-action by all public servants. When compared with the ethics rules found in the U.S. Congress, the Australian rules seem extremely general and ambitious. There is an almost unlimited number of potential infractions that could constitute ‘corrupt conduct’. Not only is it enough to show some lack of objectivity, even the possibility that some conduct could result in such a lack, directly or

indirectly, could result in that conduct being considered corrupt. It would be possible, for example, to argue that some elected official was not objective because they were making decisions and engaging in conduct that was focused upon their reelection possibilities and not the objective and full exercise of their official functions, or that bureaucrats were corrupt for putting the interests of their institutions and offices above the public good, or that members of the parliament were voting according to party line and, thus, were corrupt because they were putting the cohesion and interests of the party above the need for members of parliament to be objective. Any non-public regarding could constitute corrupt conduct. Of course, just because there are many kinds of conduct that could be considered corrupt given the above definitions does not mean that the various corruption commissions have applied and interpreted these new rules in particularly broad ways. Although the political institutions of Australia and have not self-destructed and we do not find thousands of public servants seeking asylum from corruption commissions gone amuck, there are some illuminating examples of how the expansive nature of these rules have come into conflict with what most would consider 'normal' conduct by public servants.

The ICAC case involving Terry Metherell is probably the most clear and famous example of conduct typical of public servants being found corrupt.<sup>20</sup> In April of 1992, Metherell, a member of the parliament in New South Wales, resigned from his position and accepted an appointment as a director of the Environmental Protection Agency. Metherell, a former member of the Liberal Party, was one of five independent members of the parliament that was otherwise split with forty seven members belonging to the Liberal Party and forty seven members belonging to the

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<sup>20</sup> The significance of the Metherell case to the question of corruption has been discussed by Philp (1997). Philp cites the case to illustrate the difficulties of defining political corruption in a satisfactory way.

Australian Labour Party, Nick Greiner, of the Liberal Party, was the Premier for New South Wales (ICAC 1992a, 6-8).<sup>21</sup> Metherell's resignation allowed the Liberal Party to regain his seat and take a one seat lead over the Australian Labour Party. That the Liberal Party benefited from Metherell's resignation and that they had appointed him to a well paying position the same day he resigned was the reason that the case was investigated as a potential case of political corruption.

The ICAC found Nick Greiner (and one other Minister, Tim Moore) guilty of having engaged in corrupt conduct. The reasoning behind the finding was that "... the conduct of each man involved partial exercise of his official functions, that it involved a breach of the public trust, and that it could involve reasonable grounds for their dismissal as Ministers (ICAC 1992b, 4)."<sup>22</sup> The appointment of Metherell was obviously not based on who could best serve the public good but rather on the political gains that could be realized by Metherell resigning from his elected office. Greiner acted in terms of what was in the best interest of the Liberal Party (and, thus, also himself) and, by so doing, was obviously not acting in an objective way and in a way that conformed to the full exercise of his official functions (recall the ICAC definition of corrupt conduct noted earlier). Greiner attacked the logic of the ICAC definition of corrupt conduct in his testimony, he declared that it constituted the end of politics:<sup>23</sup>

If what the Minister for the Environment did and what I did was corrupt, then in my judgement every political appointment that has ever been made in this State was corrupt. It will not be the case of the Leader of the Opposition or of a Leader in the Upper House reserving

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<sup>21</sup> Metherell had been a member of the Liberal Party, he had even been the Minister of Education and Youth Affairs in the Greiner administration of 1988-1991, he left the party in October 1991 (ICAC 1992a, 6).

<sup>22</sup> Greiner and Moore resigned their Ministerial positions and left parliament following the ICAC findings. The ICAC decisions were later declared null by the Court of Appeals.

<sup>23</sup> It was Greiner and the Liberal Party that had established in ICAC in 1989.

for themselves certain positions that they intend to use for political appointments. It will simply be against the law. ... Ultimately, if what we have done was against the law, then all honorable members need to understand that it is, for practical purposes, the death of politics in this State. Once a political party is elected to office it will be against the law for it to make decisions which are in any way influenced by political considerations. ... Under the English common law very serious obligations to act in the public interest are placed on those elected to public office, and yet our highest public officials are at the same time part of a political system which is about what is in many ways a largely private interest in terms of winning or holding a seat or holding office. This is a very difficult philosophical matter. In simple terms, the philosophy, which was once called disinterestedness, meant that once elected to Parliament members were obliged to ignore the interests of their constituents and act only in what they considered to be the national interest. We here in Australia chose not to adopt that view of parliamentary office. ... But every member needs to understand that the standards that are implied in this censure of me today are entirely new standards and are very strict standards. I am not sure, when honorable members have considered them calmly in the bright light of day, that those standards that are going to produce a workable system of democracy in our State (ICAC 1992a, 65).

This remarkable testimony by Greiner gets to the heart of the matter. If his actions are corrupt then all of modern politics is corrupt, private interests are inherent to politics as we know it. By making political corruption as such illegal, the ICAC has declared politics illegal.<sup>24</sup> The House ethics rules discussed earlier have the effect of declaring a great multiplicity of presences of the private within the public normal and acceptable by establishing rules of separation that declare only some forms of this presence as pathological. The United States, and every other modern state, has the good sense to know that a true and substantive lack of the private within the public is impossible in bourgeois society. As already noted, the functional role of

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<sup>24</sup> The ICAC was troubled enough by this case and Greiner's testimony that it took the time to reconsider its definitions of corrupt conduct. In considering the arguments for and against any changes to the existing laws, the ICAC did not suggest any changes. It reiterated the logic of why the definition was so broad as to include conduct that could be seen as inherent to the system and argued that the partial and unobjective exercise of public office can be just as damaging to the public good whether it is the product of bribery or the product of more systemic institutional and cultural forces (cf. ICAC 1992b, 14-15).

the rules of separation is not to regulate the actual substance of politics but, rather, to keep the categories we use to perceive, describe, and comprehend modern politics, clean, pure, intact, and believable. What the ICAC rules accomplish, as the Metherell case illustrates, is exactly the opposite. By taking the idea of political corruption literally and seriously, the ICAC is making visible to everyone that the abstract body of the public is nothing more than a fetish, nothing more than private interests acting ‘as if’ they were the national interest and that public servants are always and necessarily concrete individuals who are required, by the requisites of maintaining the social existence of the state, to act ‘as if’ they also possessed an abstract body.

I do not mean to suggest that the ICAC with its definition of corrupt conduct has single-handedly destroyed the conceptual edifice of the Australian state or the fiction inherent in the private/public split, although it certainly does not help them any. What the ICAC does do is enable us to appreciate the importance of rules of separation in the constitution of the public/private split in contemporary societies. The division of society into two bodies, the public and the private, so integral and constitutive of the state itself, relies upon rules and rituals/everyday practices that constantly reaffirm and reassert the naturalness and compulsion of this division.

## **Part II: Accumulation**

A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism.

-V.I. Lenin, *State and Revolution*

### **The Opacity of Transparency**

The importance and implications of the forgoing towards the question of corruption in Greece will be explored in the concluding section of this paper but a major weakness in the argument as it has developed so far must first be addressed. In spite of the arguments of the previous section, the current fascination with corruption



and the recent emergence of organizations like TI remain a mystery.<sup>25</sup> After all, if the main function of the concept of corruption is to maintain the purity of the categories of the public and private, one would expect that the question of corruption should be exclusively a domestic affair and one of no particular importance to international organizations or far flung corporations and financial institutions. Why should the World Bank or Enron or cadres of well paid and well connected technocrats place so much effort into producing lists and press releases that argue that Greece is the most corrupt member of the EU? A related mystery is why TI, an organization that is dedicated solely to combating corruption, should name itself Transparency International? In what ways is lack of transparency concurrent with corruption?

This is not to say that all of the efforts by TI, USAID, as so on, are detached from the question of legitimacy and the normal/pathological distinction already discussed. There is no doubt that these organizations view the cultures and institutions of the ‘corrupt’ societies as dysfunctional and inferior. The claim that poverty and lack of development is mainly caused by corruption fits right in with the longstanding vision of the global periphery and semi-periphery as replete with cultures and habits that limit their progress. It may very well be that Rudyard Kipling would have been sympathetic to TI’s arguments. He may have even sent off for TI’s *Corruption Fighters’ Tool Kit*. It comes complete with lesson plans for teachers who wish to teach anti-corruption values to their dark skinned students, plans for how to begin an anti-corruption day in your overly corrupt corner of the world, ideas for making and distributing your own anti-corruption cartoons, and so on. There seems to be little doubt that corruption is the outcome of political traditions and indigenous

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<sup>25</sup> In addition to the efforts of TI (which was founded in 1993), major anti-corruption campaigns by such notable organizations as the Open Society Institute, USAID, OECD, the World Bank, the United Nations, and the European Union have been initiated in the last decade.

cultures that, in short, are not sufficiently western and bourgeois. The white man's burden is still very much alive and the anti-corruption community is doing its best to civilize the beige, brown and yellow of the world. There is no reason to doubt that those behind TI actually believe their press releases, that corruption (as they perceive it) is the cause of poverty and underdevelopment. But this is little more than a testament to the degree that they can only see the world from the point of view of finance capital. The logic here is that any obstacle to the flows of capital leads to less investment, which, of course, leads to less development. If only those nasty and greedy Greek or Chinese or Algerian or Bangladeshi politicians and bureaucrats were more honest, then there would be more investments, less unemployment, less poverty, and everyone would be better off.

Despite all these obvious similarities to the colonial view of the world and its academic manifestations, the current movement against corruption is not simply or even mainly about presenting the periphery and semi-periphery as pathological in some way. In order to understand the timing of this current war against corruption, its links to the current stage of globalization must be emphasized. Similarly, rather than focusing simply on the question of culture, an examination of the anti-corruption movement and its relation to the state and capitalist accumulation is necessary for anything approaching a rigorous understanding.

In this context, the curious naming signals that, from the perspective of TI and its supporters, the question of corruption is concurrent to the question of transparency, that the problem with corruption is not so much that certain interests may or may not prevail in a given context but that administrative and decision making processes be readily visible and comprehensible to interested observers. It is here that we see that the main purpose behind TI and the many other recent efforts against so-called

corruption. Corruption as such, the subversion of the public good by private interests, takes a back seat to the desire for predictability, lower transaction costs for capital and the elimination of all informality in regulations and rules. A very revealing component of TI's Corruption Perceptions Index is PricewaterhouseCoopers's (PWC) Opacity Index (OI).<sup>26</sup> PWC does not burden itself with all those niceties that TI emphasises, talk of 'civil society', the world's poor, and so on. It is very direct and honest regarding the purpose of its research and index, to aid capital in its investment decisions. The OI attempts to gage all those hidden, non-transparent, costs involved in investment around the globe. This 'opacity' includes 'corruption' in the narrow sense of bribes but also includes in its measure the tendency for policies and regulations to be irregularly applied or changed unpredictably. The 'opacity' measure can be expressed in terms of a 'risk premium' when it comes to purchasing sovereign bonds or in terms of a 'tax equivalent' when it comes to direct investment (cf. PWC 2001). Thus, when it comes to direct foreign investment, in addition to whatever formal, transparent, taxes there may be in a given county, a prudent investor should also factor in the additional costs that occur because of bribes, unpredictable policy changes, and the like. According to the most recent OI, for Greece the tax equivalent of its opacity is 22%, for the UK 7%, for the US 5%, for Italy 15%, for Russia 43%, for Turkey 36%, and for China 46% (PWC 2001, 2).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The CPI is an index of indexes. The 2002 version draws upon fifteen indexes, one of which is PWC's Opacity Index. Other indexes include those by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the World Economic Forum, and Political & Economic Risk Consultancy. A complete list of indexes can be found at <http://www.transparency.org/cpi/2002/cpi2002.sources.en.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Beyond the forgoing are all the information costs that accompany 'opacity'. Companies such as PWC are paid to produce risk assessment measures and individuals who are familiar with the local informal arrangements and clientelist networks, for example, must be hired. Knowing how much of a bribe must be paid and to whom doesn't come cheap.

In this light, the corporate and governmental sponsors of TI as well as its curious naming make perfect sense. It is not some overarching notion of public interest that is being protected from private interests, rather, it is certain kinds of particular interests (mainly those of international capital) being protected from rent seeking behaviour by public servants as well as any unforeseen shifts in public policy that may occur because of the rise and fall of competing clientelist networks, populist tendencies, and so on. Characteristically, following the Enron fiasco TI reprinted an editorial from the *Financial Times* that argued that no significant changes were need regarding the presence of corporate interests in the legislative process:

The business of America really is business and this salient fact is based in constitutional and cultural conditions that will not easily be repealed. ... The really shocking thing is that none of this makes America a fundamentally more corrupt place. This symbiotic relationship between companies and those who govern them can actually lead to better governance, protective laws and steadily rising prosperity. The right consequences of the Enron affair should be measures that refine and improve this partnership, not abolish it (Baker 2002).

Neither USAID, nor TI, nor the World Bank, nor their corporate patrons, are arguing against corporate interests being determinates of public policy. From the perspective that equates corruption to opacity, the presence of private interests within the policy making process is fine. It only becomes a corruption when it results in some lack of transparency.

### **Instrumental Reason and the Relative-Autonomy of the State**

The foregoing points to a much more basic element within contemporary forms of governance, legal rationality. Max Weber's famous three ideal types of authority are charismatic, traditional and legal-rational (Weber 1978, 212-254). Each is distinguished by the reasons someone would obey a command (Weber 1978, 36). Put simply, in charismatic authority the reason for obedience is an affectual response

to the person giving the command, in traditional authority commands are obeyed out of habit, and in legal-rational authority commands are obeyed because of a rational calculation. Rationality refers to a cost-benefit calculation that functions as the basis of the action, thus someone would obey a particular command or rule because they judge it to be in their best interest to do so, the benefits outweigh the costs. For such instrumental reason to be possible, however, one must be able to gage costs and benefits. Instrumental rationality presupposes law and the consistent enforcement and interpretation of the laws through bureaucratic organization. For example, unless you know the penalty for parking illegally it is impossible in most cases to make a rational decision as to whether or not to follow parking regulations since the costs are unpredictable. It may be the case that in matters of life or death or other extreme situations the penalty will always be less than the benefit but, in the vast majority of cases, the difference between a penalty being two or twenty or fifty or a hundred euros will be very significant and this has to be known and predictable for instrumental reason to be possible.

Accordingly, the push for transparency can be understood as an effort to secure the conditions necessary for instrumental reason. Capitalist enterprises tend to follow the logic of instrumental reason, maximizing utility and engaging in actions where the benefits outweigh the costs. When it comes to the state and its regulations, capital depends upon the presence of law and bureaucracy in order to be able to make rational decisions regarding their investments. The lack of 'corruption' from this perspective is equal to the intelligibility and predictability of state regulation. The actions of TI and similar organizations illustrate the measures that capital and its servants undertake in order to secure the conditions necessary for instrumental reason. The need for predictability necessitates that state forms be made as bureaucratic as

possible and that laws be posited, clearly written, and consistently applied. All informal arrangements, confusing laws and inconsistent enforcements become branded as opaque/corrupt.

An element within this process of the rationalization and bureaucratization of the state form is the securing of the relative-autonomy of the state. The relative-autonomy of the capitalist state refers to the autonomy that the state enjoys from particular interests (Poulantzas 1973). As Poulantzas famously argued, for the state to function as a capitalist state, it must be able to go against some particular interests in order to secure the general conditions necessary for capital accumulation. Although he did not emphasize the question of predictability, the desire for ‘transparency’ and the forming of relative-autonomy go hand in hand. Let us take the question of clientelism as an important and indicative example of this relationship. There is little doubt that capitalist interests are a significant part of clientelist networks in Greece and elsewhere. From the point of view of the capitalist class as a whole and the general conditions necessary for the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production, this may likely present problems in that the pursuing of the interests particular to the clients of a given political party or group may often conflict with the needs of capitalism as a whole, making it difficult to rationalize the economy in ways that incorporates the interests and demands of competing factions of capital or of the dominated classes, and so on.<sup>28</sup> In addition to these well know arguments there is the added problem in that policies become less stable and are susceptible to unpredictable shifts and changes. The opposition to clientelism is not because capitalists do not want to have access to and receive favours from public servants, they desire that this process take place in a stable and predictable manner. What happens when there is a

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<sup>28</sup> For a full discussion of relative-autonomy and its functionality for capital accumulation, see Poulantzas (1973)and Jessop (1990 and 2002).

change in the ruling party? What will happen to all the deals, favours, and policies that were provided by the previous ruling party? Clientelism results in unpredictability and the potential for acute and sudden damage to the self-interests of capitalist entities. Individual corporations and investors have good reason to prefer the corporatist and pluralistic structures typical of advanced capitalist societies to the clientelistic arrangements that may tend to prevail in those societies that TI and its cohorts categorize as corrupt.

Of course, the foregoing says nothing regarding the substance of laws and policies. It may very well be the case that in Finland public policies are very stable and the bureaucracies very strong and reliable but that, none the less, the substance of these policies make it much less attractive for many forms of direct foreign investment when compared to China or Poland, for example. Even when you can predict costs exactly, they still may be higher than expected benefits. Moreover, the potential for benefits may be so great that they outweigh the potential 'opacity' costs. According to the OI, the cost of corruption/opacity in China is equal to a 46% tax. None the less, there is plenty of capital flowing into China, presumably the expected benefits from these investments outweigh the projected costs and risks. None the less, the form of the state is a major determinant of policy and the attempts to transform existing state structures into increasingly bourgeois and bureaucratic forms is a pivotal moment in the spread of capital and its internal logic.

### **The Globalization of the Capitalist State**

The contemporary movement against corruption and the tendency for the institutions of international capital to be the agents behind this movement thus has drastic implications regarding the process of globalization and the internationalization of certain state forms. As capital becomes more mobile and more trans-national in its

scope, the demands upon all states to become increasingly similar to those in advanced capitalist societies become more pronounced, and in ways that go beyond the usual arguments regarding the pressures to adopt neo-liberal policies. In opposition to contemporary arguments that globalization results in the weakening of the state and the gradual loss of its capacity and autonomy, the arguments above point to the opposite. Capitalists in the narrow sense and capitalism in the aggregate demand that states have the autonomy from narrow interests in order to establish consistent policies and regulations and that the implementation of these policies be predictable and uniform. Certain modes of interest articulation, such as clientelism, as well as the pre-capitalist organizational forms that conflict with these demands become branded as opaque and corrupt.

Contemporary movements directed against corruption are best understood in this context. This not only explains the timing of their emergence but also explains their ties to capital and their peculiar understanding of corruption as opacity. In contrast to the usual ways that the question of corruption has and continues to function in relation to instituting and maintaining the purity of the categories of the public and private, the idea of corruption now also functions as a way of pressuring nation-states to adapt to the demands of capital by becoming increasingly bureaucratic, predictable and relatively autonomous. The ‘best possible political shell’ for capitalism may be, as Lenin argued, a democratic republic but a state that possesses relative autonomy and has a properly functioning bureaucracy is a more than sufficient shell for global capitalism today and the creation of such sufficiently appropriate shells appears to be an implicit goal for TI and other anti-corruption reformers.



### **Conclusion: Future Directions for Research on Corruption and Greece**

If anything can be gleaned from the arguments presented here, it is that in order to understand the question of political corruption in Greece one must go beyond Greece and examine the overarching processes that underpin the phenomenon of corruption. All attempts to comprehend corruption in Greece in isolation, as some kind of self-contained ‘special case’, is destined to produce trite and naïve understandings. As this paper has demonstrated, there are two interrelated processes that are central for understanding how it is that Greek politics become perceived as corrupt; first, within the advanced capitalist societies, there are the rules of separation that regulate the categories of the public and private and create the perceptions of what is a normal or pathological ordering of the public and the private. These rules not only help structure the perceptions within each society but also help determine how individuals will tend to perceive and judge other societies. Second, as globalization has intensified, the institutions of global capital have begun to equate the idea of corruption to that of opacity and have propagated this perception through the media and international organizations.

Both of these processes have severe implications towards the questions to be addressed regarding corruption and Greece. Most important of all, for the Greek context, is the observation that the categorization of something as corrupt/pathological is only a referent to categories of bourgeois ontology and says nothing about the desirability or worth of that which is categorized. To call Greek politics corrupt says nothing more than it tends to conflict with a particular ordering of ideas regarding the public and private. The formalistic and technocratic equation of ‘corrupt’ with ‘undesirable’ has to be resisted. Something can be ‘corrupt’ and be desirable or be ‘clean’ and be undesirable. Let us take the question of the Greek national medical

system. The tendency to give ‘envelopes’ in order to receive preferential or attentive service is well known.<sup>29</sup> From the typical western perspective, such endemic ‘bribery’ is sure to be labelled an example of corruption and this form of allocating medical care is likely to be judged undesirable. Indeed, I suspect that most Greeks would consider it a corruption and something that should be done away with. However, if we ignore the informal nature of the exchange itself and focus on the larger questions of how egalitarian the distribution of medical care is and how much money (bribe included) this care costs compared to other systems – we may very well judge the Greek medical system to be superior to many that are perceived as ‘uncorrupt’. Is an informal exchange between doctor and patient really more troubling than the power that the American Medical Association or the pharmaceutical industry have within the U.S. legislature? It could be, but the point is that an argument has to be made, the labelling of something as corrupt cannot trump real political discussion and analysis. What if we formalized ‘envelopes’ and called them co-payments? They would then likely fall under the category of not being corrupt, but would the Greek medical system be any better than it was before?

Similarly, given that the corrupt/uncorrupt designation refers to the purity of classification, something being or not being out of place, the focus of explanations of corruption should be exactly that – how these categorizations and perceptions are formed and regulated. The examination of the U.S. and Australian cases was, in part, an effort to uncover how rules of separation work and to emphasize the point that even in cases where politics is judged to be ‘clean’ there is still a presence of private regarding within the public, it is just that it is in a form that is considered to be acceptable given the rules of separation. The overarching political function of the

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<sup>29</sup> ‘Envelopes’ is a euphemism in Greece for bribes given to doctors and other medical staff.

rules of separation is, given the foregoing, to justify and legitimize all those instances of private regarding within the public body that are not deemed pathological. For Greek politics, the significance of this point is that there is no more and no less of a presence of private regarding within the public body than there is in the United States or Australia or Finland or the United Kingdom or Iraq or anywhere else. The problem for Greece is that even though it may have its own rules of separation, both in the form of ethical codes and criminal law and in the form of cultural attitudes and practices that have long governed the division between public and private, those perceptions endemic to Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other advanced capitalist societies have been imported into Greece by way of the media, the Greek diaspora, Greek intellectuals, E.U. regulations, and so on. On the one hand, these imported perceptions will tend to lead Greeks themselves to judge Greek political life as rife with corruption and thus will tend to decrease the legitimacy of the Greek state. On the other hand, any attempt to undo the 'corrupt' elements of Greek politics are bound to further erode support in that the clientelist networks that the major Greek political parties are based upon demand that favours and resources be directed toward the party faithful. Such tensions and fissures in contemporary Greek politics can and should be addressed in terms of how the perceptions of corruption impact the political process, how the rules of separation in Greece are transforming, and how long standing mechanisms of interest articulation begin to wither and become replaced by more typical and 'clean' forms of interest articulation (e.g. interest groups). Moreover, the likely shift away from those traditional modes of political life that have become perceived as corrupt is likely to result in new patterns of political participation and distribution of public resources. In the American case, it has often been argued that the decline of the patronage system and machine politics

resulted in a much lower degree of political mobilization as well as less egalitarian distribution of political spoils. How this may develop in Greece remains to be seen. In addition, if and how the transformation of attitudes within the Greek bureaucracy occurs will also be a fascinating question to be examined.<sup>30</sup> In short, the solidification of bourgeois political ontology in Greece opens up many new sets of questions and problems to be studied.

The problem of accumulation also opens up new areas of inquiry. To what extent will the capitalist demand for ‘transparency’ and predictability limit the degree to which newly elected ruling parties change existing policies? Will the Greek state become more autonomous from its traditional clients and increasingly rule on their behalf rather than at their behest? Will the perception of risk be minimized in order to engender more direct foreign investments?

Finally, the arguments in this paper have consistently pointed to the ways that the question of corruption has served as a means for extending the interests of the capitalist class and solidifying bourgeois politics. Ideally, in Greece and elsewhere, the categories of the public and private as they are presently constituted will be abandoned as political theology and a limit to real politics. It may be the case that this is not immanent and that modern politics will continue to occupy itself with putting things in their ‘proper’ place and with the technocratic tasks of regulation, predictability, and risk management. None the less, the concept of corruption is symptomatic of contradictions within the structures of modern politics and capitalist society. As the Australian case illustrated, the contradictions of bourgeois politics may often become visible in spite of or even because of the efforts to mask and

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<sup>30</sup> I was told by the head of one Greek agency that he preferred to hire only those who had studied and lived abroad, so that they would be familiar with the ‘proper’ bureaucratic attitude.

displace them. The struggles and contradictions crystallized by the question of corruption may yet result in radical and unforeseen political change.

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