

INTRODUCTION

The Arts and State Power

Judith Kapferer

We are not going to protect art. The more cultural protection we enact, the more waste we have, the more false successes, false promotions there are. It puts us in the marketing realm of culture. (Baudrillard 2005)

The development of the arts as a collective modern phenomenon is intricately woven into its genesis in the milieu of princely Renaissance courts of varying size, complexity, and indeed grandeur that provided sustenance and shelter to artists of all kinds during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries (see Burckhardt [1860] 1990). The protection of artists was the province of aristocratic dynasties that could augment or rescind their patronage at unpredictable moments; nonetheless, as Elias (1993) makes clear, artists such as Mozart struggled constantly to maintain some kind of independence from their noble benefactors.

By the eighteenth century, such a degree of freedom had already been afforded writers unattached to the court by the spread of literacy and the growing body of aristocrats and the bourgeoisie that constituted their readership. This latitude was granted to essayists, poets, and dramatists despite not infrequent lapses from grace as the result of circulating overly critical or even scurrilous views that offended the objects of their attacks. In places like France or Britain, with centralized imperial courts that were almost entirely separated from the provinces, the punishment for plain-spoken or libelous critiques included ostracism, horsewhipping, imprisonment, or bankruptcy. But given the centralized nature of the court society and the stimulation of the metropolis, the option of exile was not greatly utilized. Conversely, the patronage of princes in Italy and Germany allowed those not so dependent on literacy—painters, and musicians, for example—to flourish. Contravention of courtly codes still attracted severe sanctions, but for these artists, relocating to another, more congenial court was indeed a possibility.



It was in this period and in this kind of cultural environment that the public sphere was generated (Habermas 1992). Here was an arena for political debate and social criticism in which the ideals of the Enlightenment took root and provided fertile ground for the development of a range of philosophers, scientists, artists, and writers—an intelligentsia, in fact. The space of the intelligentsia was still the world of the rich and powerful, but they too were drawn into the circle of critique and argumentation. As well as offering a measure of financial and moral support, their patronage allowed for the publication and dissemination of literary, musical, and artistic works. Collectors such as the architect and antiquarian Sir John Soane and Queen Anne, the patron of Georg Friedrich Handel, were among them. Later, people like the diplomat Lord Elgin and the financier and archaeologist Lord Caernavon (partner with Howard Carter in uncovering the tomb of King Tutankhamun in 1922) would be included.

The Public Sphere and the Enlightenment Project

The demise of the public sphere and its separation of public from private lives at the end of the nineteenth century also presaged the end of the Enlightenment project. Accompanied by the burgeoning power of the merchant class in the nineteenth century and the triumph of capital in the twentieth, opportunities for patronage were rapidly expanded. In particular, the enormous wealth of the robber barons of the United States, concerned for their own profit and social aggrandizement (Veblen [1899] 1970) and the prestige of their national institutions (Freeland 2001; Karp 1992; Zukin 1995), extended the international trade in artworks and the construction of museums and art galleries to accommodate them. In this instance, the interests of the national state and of capital dovetailed tidily, the one supporting the other. As in many later polities, although never since with such impact, the age of private philanthropy was born.

The conjunction of private and public interests was, and remains, a major tool for the symbolic expression of national pride and private satisfaction, although the individual interests of pecuniary emulation have given way to the power of major philanthropic foundations, which are now so much a feature of the aesthetic concerns of North American capital in particular. The diminution of the public sphere was concomitant with the waning influence of the bourgeoisie and the increasing privatism of corporations and their discourse on matters relevant to the political and economic arenas. The flowering of the power of 'big capital' went hand in glove with the rise of the 'new class' of technocrats, entrepreneurs, and celebrities: popular musicians, film and television actors, sports stars, lifestyle 'gurus' in fields such as cuisine, fashion, decorating, and architecture. The 'new class' had, by the mid-twentieth century, totally surpassed the influence of the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie and its nineteenth-century remnants, which by that time had turned its attention to the accumulation of capital and the exploitation of natural resources abroad and human resources (the working class) at home. The relation between the

arts and the state had been transformed from a discourse on tastes and morality to one of economic rationalism and political collusion.

Throughout what has been referred to as the ‘American century’ of US political dominance of world affairs, the construction of prestigious buildings has gathered pace, and, as a result, the centrality of architects as representatives of the aesthetic sensibilities of the age has been greatly enhanced.¹ We might adduce as examples of this phenomenon the figures of Le Corbusier, Gehry, Johnson, Pei, Rogers, Hadad, Foster, and many others whose works are celebrated around the world. Both government-funded and corporation-commissioned structures—the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Gehry), Berlin’s new Reichstag (Foster), the Sydney Opera House (Utzon), London’s Millennium Dome (Rogers)—partake of this iconicity of concrete and symbolic expressions of power and ambition.

The association of commercially successful architects and artists with patrons and benefactors is well illustrated by the coterie of financiers, curators, auctioneers, valuers, and dealers engaged in the dissemination of their works. The role of Charles Saatchi (co-founder of the British advertising company M&C Saatchi and owner of the Saatchi Gallery) as patron and promoter of the products of particular exponents of so-called Britart in the 1990s is a case in point. The art market, its popularization, and the sanctification of artists and their works (Bourdieu 1996), along with the competitive emulation of traders, brokers, buyers, and sellers of such works (Wu 2002), compose the foundation of the commodity fetishism that ineluctably colors the contemporary aesthetics of capital. It is due to the ‘new class’ (Gouldner 1979; Szelenyi and Martin 1988) of consultants, technocrats, and managers that art markets find their clientele in regenerated and gentrified inner cities—SoHo in Manhattan and the East End of London, for example.²

Cities and Civilizations

“Judge a civilisation by its cities,” advises Will Hutton (2000: vi) in his introduction to Rogers and Power’s (2000) *Cities for a Small Country*. Cities, he continues, are where people “work, associate, recreate, politic, scheme and love.” The city, as metonym, can also be judged a civilization by its arts and sciences, crafts and philosophies, politics and economics; by all of its cultural and social productions and their articulations and interconnections; by its whole way of life, in fact, as the anthropologists say.

It comes as no surprise, then, to recognize the metropolitan nature of everyday life in the twenty-first century: more than half of the world’s population now lives in towns and cities. Furthermore, the metropolis is the home not only of the arts and sciences of civilization but also of the values, beliefs, intellects, and imaginings of a vortex of disputation and debate about their importance to a civilized and civil way of being. Here, under late capitalism, the essentially individualist concerns of the aesthetics and commerce of the culture industry have installed themselves in the role of ideological leaders at center stage, relegating the concerns of other political, social, and cultural collectivities to minor

roles as spear carriers waiting in the wings and anterooms of the ‘total social formation’. The city provides and nurtures the critical mass wherein dwell the teachers and learners, the acolytes of an array of cultures that define it and give it its form and substance. It is the city that offers a way out of the ‘rural idiocy’ that, for Marx and Engels (1976), characterized the closed, narrow, taken-for-grantedness of an unexamined existence. It is also the site of the snobbery and greed that is a feature of the new capitalist class and that is overwhelmingly ignorant of anything other than itself.

The importance of architecture in current formulations of aesthetic value within the cultures of everyday life is Hutton’s (2000) theme. Once the province of numerous and nameless draftsmen, craftsmen, builders, and dreamers in the execution of homes, churches, palaces, parks, and public buildings, architecture has now achieved an expanded significance of being crucial to our understanding of social and cultural formulations of the arts of living. Such structures, at the same time imagined and manifested in both literal and metaphorical senses, have become the property of a range of scholars, critics, and commentators who live and work in a world that constantly envisages utopian and practical means of improving or embellishing public and private living spaces.

This is a world constituted in a welter of histories, memories, heritages, and resurgent nationalism and its putative counterweight—globalization. The central importance of Eastern Europe and the Federal Republic of Germany is that the former represents the fall of the old, autocratic, nineteenth-century empires and the would-be dictatorial empires of the twentieth century, and the latter represents the rise of the new, postmodern, decentered ‘Empire’ of Hardt and Negri’s (2000) imagining: here is highlighted the concern of Europeans to make sense of the shifting patterns of state formations in relation to understanding the individual and society, public and private manners, and moralities and the arts of democracy itself. But Jean Baudrillard (2005: 65), in an essay titled “La commedia dell’arte” in his *Conspiracy of Art*, maintains that “art no longer seems to have a vital function,” having been appropriated by a political regime within which it enacts a partnership, a collusion with politics itself, to the extent that one is a mere metonym of the other. Such a conspiracy is, as this collection of essays argues, to be resisted for the benefit of both art and (making a virtue of necessity) the state.

A critical approach to the relation between the arts and the state has as its very center the idea of administration—the assembling, distribution, evaluation, and organization of culture as a bureaucratically regulated arm of the cultural departments of cities, “disparate elements considered together as culture, at least momentarily” (Adorno 1991: 108). The role of the cultural expert is crucial in the administration of the formulation and reformulation of values in the service of the state. This is clearly seen in relation to the role of the market in determining the monetary value attached to culture and the arts; in education, it is demonstrated in the formation of new religious sects and the revitalization of old ones—in the idea of conservative ‘family values’, for instance. The expertly administered world is another control mechanism of dominant social orders, as Weber (1978) was well aware. Yet it is becoming less and less a seamless ideological phenomenon, with constant economic scandals

and administrative restructurings testifying to the unease of observers and participants alike (Baudrillard says we are all complicit).

The arts (across all fields of creative production) have an unusually ambivalent relation to the state and other agencies of political and economic control within urban society, and it is in the cracks in between that spaces for resistance and critique are to be found. From ancient times, the arts have been used to represent and promote the forces of power in ruling socio-political regimes. But they have also been engaged in challenging those institutions of power and in breaking through those conceptions, values, and conventions that are associated with hegemonic state authority and governing social orders. Assyrian, Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Aztec, Chinese, Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, industrial, and post-industrial projects have long placed the arts and humanities at the centers of power through their involvement with both ideological and repressive practices of domination.

It is our purpose to address here the relation of the arts of living to institutions of order and control in current state formations and to explore some of the ways in which cultural practice may partake of and map out a range of the shifting alignments, articulations, and configurations of contemporary states. Art, or more broadly, culture, is always implicated, for good or ill, in the operation, manipulation, and legitimation of regnant social orders.³

‘Empire’ and Transnational Networks

A key concept at the turn of the twenty-first century has been that of ‘Empire’. Hardt and Negri (2000: 325) characterize ‘Empire’ as a “decentralising force that distributes different forms of power (political, economic, cultural) through dispersed centres, yet these forms connect in global networks that cross-cut national boundaries and thus challenge national state sovereignty.” Their picture is one of political, economic, and, above all, cultural networks slicing through the orders of nation-states and deployed within intermittent affiliations, mergers, and takeovers. Thus, for example, international partnerships mounting cultural festivals, traveling exhibitions and performances, world music, ‘roots’ festivals, and numerous conferences and seminars abound. But it is uncertain whether there remains a hierarchy of participants and venues that reflects the global power relations of such events.

The thesis of ‘Empire’ is imbricated with the notion of globalization, variously connoting blocs of political or economic power embodied in alliances and treaty arrangements such as the European Union (EU), NATO, the UN Security Council, the G7 or G8, and so forth. The changing social and cultural relations among the former Soviet bloc countries of the Cold War period have resulted in potentially fruitful sets of realigned and reshaped connections and disconnections that are constantly shifting, with consequences for social relations on a global scale. Hardt and Negri follow Deleuze and Guattari (1988) in their fascination with the central image of the nomadic war machine as the metaphor that describes and defines the fluid and instantly adaptable mechanics of cross-cutting ties among

people in extra-territorial social relations, helping to create a decentered ‘new Empire’ where, it is hoped, the arts of peace will bloom.

Alain Joxe (2002), on the other hand, sees what he calls the “empire of disorder” as opening up spaces for contestation and transformation in the interstices of societal orders within and beyond national state structures and territories. These nodes and networks form what Castells (1989) and others call the ‘information society’ and what some (e.g., Harvey 1990) refer to as post-industrialism, post-colonialism, or even post-capitalism. Joxe’s picture of this empire is a gloomy one, stressing its fracturing and fragmentary nature, while Hardt and Negri’s outlook is much more optimistic (in what is perhaps a singularly American way). Their idea of ‘Empire’ is essentially one that promises power to the people—that is, people steeped in a carefully defined and administrated political, economic, social, and cultural world under the reign of capitalist democracy supported by military and economic sanctions and rewards. In this regime, the old notion of empire as designating colonial or post-colonial spheres of influence or imperialist takeover gives way to a series of tightrope-walking acts constantly maneuvering for extra-territorial financial and cultural advantage. Yet the dice remain loaded in favor of those states of the West and the North that have reordered their political, economic, social, and cultural arrangements to maintain their old sovereignties and forge new ones in the new global empire—satrapies within the revitalized capitalist formation of the American empire.⁴

The distinction between culture and civilization has a long pedigree (see, e.g., Adorno 1991; Elias 2000; Marx and Engels 1976) and essentially turns on the very fact of the judgment and evaluation of any specific way of life as more or less worthy of admiration and emulation than another. The distinction between the arts and art is a cognate concern. The right/duty of artists and intellectuals to interpret, criticize, and publicize the political and economic hypocrisies and prevarications of nation-states and the post-national worlds of twenty-first-century capital is as urgent as ever. Perhaps it is all the more pressing in an age in which commercial priorities, under the aegis of ‘Empire’, are ascendant, and exchange value outweighs the use value of education and the arts. One clear example of this process is the comparatively recent emphasis on management techniques in the area of religious administrations (often enough, complete with financial scandals and lapses in the faith of the leaders). Another is evident in the arts, where the most egregious instances of the ascendancy of commercial ‘properties’—involving phenomenal sums being paid for classic or fashionable works and litigation about copyright, theft, and fraud—are to be found. A telling example is the case of artworks that, when purchased, are never displayed in public places but are instead incarcerated in vaults. These are truly the acts of patrons who know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Culture and Critique

What is to be stressed in this context is the much-vaunted prerogative of artists and intellectuals to uphold and advance the ideals of diverse communities in

exercising and practicing constitutional rights, such as the freedom of expression, as conceptualized by artists, writers, poets, dramatists, crafts people, musicians, scientists, and, above all, educated citizens. The role of the educated citizen is crucial here, and it is increasingly under attack by those intellectuals who have an ulterior motive—financial profit, cultural domination, electoral advantage, social control, or the overt and covert manufacturing of consent, for example. Perhaps, also, the unpublicized motives of administrators and politicians—and large bodies of the general public—are often little more than taken-for-granted understandings of the relation between politics, economics, and the exchange value of art in the corporate state.

Here is Adorno (1991: 116–117) again: “Culture ... involves an irrevocably critical impulse towards the status quo and all institutions thereof ... The concept of culture has been utilized to a great extent through its emancipation from the actual processes of life experienced with the rise of the bourgeoisie and the Enlightenment ... Today manifestations of extreme artistry can be fostered, produced and presented by official institutions; indeed art is dependent on such support if it is to be produced at all and find its way to an audience. Yet at the same time, art denounces everything institutional and official.”⁵ This contradiction involving the role of the arts in the maintenance of the social order, as achieved through the processes of governmentality and the ideological state apparatuses (Althusser 1971), lies at the heart of the themes of this collection. Hereby, culture, as Adorno says, is transformed into a lubricant for the systems of administration and political practice that, in effect, define the state itself—the ensemble of interests that Poulantzas (1978: 16) calls the ‘total social formation’.

But the arts (and, increasingly, populist ‘entertainment’) are more than providers of bread and circuses or the means for the execution and operation of the works of various ministries of culture and other related government departments. Culture, as opposed to what the purveyors of mere entertainment and basic primary school education call ‘cultural activities’, is not just a lubricant; it is a vital element of the legitimation of government policy. As such, it reaches far beyond the realms of politics, administration, and economics, as do, of course, those cultural activities masquerading as art that Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) so scorned as the ‘culture industry’—the instruments of mystification produced by the mass media. Their obfuscations and half lies are indicators of the waning of the Enlightenment project, through which it had been hoped that reason would dispel the darkness of myth, superstition, and Weber’s (1978) ‘enchantment of the world’. The culture industry—which has since been termed the ‘cultural industries’ or the ‘creative industries’ (Caves 2000; Florida 2004; Hartley 2004; Hesmondhalgh 2002)—and the arts themselves are in fact complicit in the practices of re-enchantment and de-rationalization of the public sphere and the entire Enlightenment project (see Kapferer 2007).

The order of the ‘new Empire’ is premised on a preference for individualism, a style of life that overrides the order of the community. Competitive capital accumulation is attested to everywhere—in the mass media, the press, advertising, window displays, Internet sites, etc.—as a dominant concern. US citizens in particular mourn the passing of a community spirit characterized by egalitarianism,

cooperation, compassion, and mutual support that was once thought to symbolize the order of the democratic small town meeting acclaimed by de Tocqueville. The works of writers such as Robert Putnam (2000), Richard Sennett (2003), Lyn Lofland (1998), Ray Oldenburg (1999), and many others illustrate the dilemma involved in balancing the public and private aspects of everyday life, no more precariously than in the ownership of property and space.

The fetishism of culture as commodity and that segment of culture called the arts is the central concern of these articles. That concern is embodied in the relation between the arts and the state that, for good or ill, shapes our understanding of aesthetics as the central component of the politics of space, manifested in the concrete structures and abstract realizations of a capitalist dispensation. Fractious and frequently antagonistic, the often teeth-gritting⁶ relationship between the various ideological state apparatuses and their couplings (art-technology, art-craft, art-warfare, art-religion, art-economy, art-politics), along with the overarching social order of the ideology-repression dyad, holds the power structures of the state together. The ensemble of these momentary connections and disjunctions is the stuff of the political administration of the arts in our time. The phases of regulation, de-regulation, and re-regulation of national economies parallel those of the market in aesthetics, and it is the understanding of these relationships that provides for the sustaining and revival of the aesthetic impulse, either in opposition or in reinforcement.

This installs both the corporate state and the welfare state at the heart of judgments of cultural value that are conceived of as advancing 'our' civilization: liberty, equality, comradeship, compassion, democracy, education, the family, religion, the rule of law, human and civil rights, etc. The state is charged with the protection of those values, including the cultural/aesthetic values that enhance the quality of life and maintain its legitimacy. In the interstices and contradictions of the legitimations of cultural practice are to be found those spaces for rebellion against the status quo and the powerful imaginaries of new formulations of the everyday acts of mundane existence, of the humanities and the aesthetics of the arts of living.

How do cultural contexts affect contemporary power formations—and vice versa? Are other social formations (religious, ethnic, multicultural, etc.) replacing the social contract between states and citizens? Does the overriding concern for personal and national security in the contemporary world benefit artistic production, or is it more a regulatory and constricting force?

The State as Socio-Cultural Production

The genesis of this collection lies in a workshop of eight participants convened in 2005 at the University of Bergen. Over the next year, our discussions eventually concentrated on three major facets of the arts-state relation. Firstly, we addressed cultural politics both within and beyond state administrations and state policies, as explored in this section by Malcolm Miles on public art in the UK, Monica Sassatelli on EU arts policies, and Jeremy Valentine on the auditing of bureaucratic

and administrative processes linking the government and the Scottish Arts Council within the framework of Scotland's National Cultural Strategy.

Secondly, we examined some articulations between public art and political contexts. Henri Beunders writes on artistic expression and violent reaction to such expression in the Netherlands, and Marina Fokidis discusses resistance to state domination along the ancient Mediterranean route known as the Egnatia Road.

Thirdly, we investigated some meanings of memory, social change, and the arts of the state through the lenses provided by Karen Kipphoff on monuments in Berlin and Bucharest, by Inger-Elin Øye on private lives and social orders in the reunified Federal Republic of Germany, and by Judith Kapferer on public space and the socio-cultural public sphere in London.

This is hardly a neatly demarcated arrangement, and many of the articles pertain to more than one of these three areas of analysis. We are equally conscious of a number of lacunae, occasioned by our inability to persuade representatives of various arts to answer our call for contributions—film, music, and literature being the most conspicuous of these. For this we apologize. Hopefully, others will later fill in some of the gaps that we were unable to cover.

The objective of our deliberations has been to focus on civil society and on cultural and social contexts within and/or beyond state borders, addressing a range of issues involving the arts, the culture industries, cultural NGOs and interest groups, and other social movements relating to creative production. To this end, we attempted to determine the extent to which the various social formations that constitute civil society act in lieu of direct state control and government power—as, to use Foucault's (1979) term, a form of governmentality. Do these formations undercut state power, constituting nodes of resistance to it? Or do they uphold and legitimate it?

In the following essays we touch on a number of local and global questions pertaining to these issues:

- Imperialist and transnational domination of cultural practice: taste, style, and new class hegemony—cooperation and competition among museums; galleries; dance, orchestra, and theater companies; and the entertainment industries
- Spaces of resistance, legitimation, support, co-optation, and/or accommodation to changing state forms: divisions and alliances across different public arenas and public spaces
- The corporate media as sites of artistic expression and production: to what extent do they bring the arts into new relations of uneasy association with powerful controlling interests?
- Resurgent nationalism and ethnic revitalization
- Shifting modes of cultural production: moves, already well advanced, to further privatization, professionalization, and formal training in cultural fields

Is the state itself, then, a cultural production? We claim that it is, and we see the arts and the culture industry itself as all too often the fundamental prop

of the dominant military-industrial complex of current state structures. Like Baudrillard's (2005: 66) Danubian peasant, "who knows nothing but suspects something is wrong," we struggle to understand the ramifications of this conjuncture, wary of the pretentiousness and associations that feed the conspiracies of art—through administrative regulation, the commercial dealings of the 'symbolic economy' (Zukin 1995), the education and training of artists, and the influence of metropolitan critics. The autonomy of the arts is constantly threatened by the cultures of affluent consumers and investors—the patrons and courtiers of post-industrial society. Artists are squeezed by state policies, on the one hand, and the arts market, on the other, thus being denied the creative space and freedom of expression to pursue their own distinctive practices. The legitimation of arts policies is the legitimation of the corporate state itself, of a contemporary ruling class in search not of a post-Enlightenment vision but of a rapacious individual identity centered on the competitive accumulation of financial and cultural capital.

Bourdieu (1998: 7) refers to civic virtue and the public interest as being embattled vis-à-vis the return of an individualism "which tends to destroy the philosophical foundations of the welfare state and in particular the notion of collective responsibility ... which has been a fundamental achievement of social (and sociological) thought." He adduces here the role of the 'new intellectuals' and the economistic belief in 'blaming the victim', engaging in a social science reduced to journalistic commentary.

Thus, the current lethargy of intellectual life—with artists, writers, philosophers, and scientists increasingly failing to confront the self-serving political-administrative functionaries of the corporate state—is also complicit in lessening the force of debate and critique in the public sphere. It is these tendencies that require constant and urgent questioning and refutation in support of civilization and democratic practices, and it is these critical issues that inform the articles we now place before you.

Acknowledgments

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Norwegian Research Council and colleagues in the Challenging the State project (directed by Bruce Kapferer) of the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Bergen. Their support, along with the invaluable editorial assistance of Shawn Kendrick, has made it possible to put this collection of essays into publishable form.

Notes

1. In Ayn Rand's (1943) novel, *The Fountainhead*, the figure of architect Robert Roark, whose insistence on his personal will in the face of bureaucratic intransigence brings about his own destruction, is an egregious example. One does not have to look far, however, to find other, non-fiction examples. The vision of Adolf Hitler as translated by the architect Albert Speer is a case in point. As an influential artist, Speer clearly stamped his imprimatur on his era.
2. See Hewitt's (1996) description of the rise to respectability of the formerly disreputable artists' garrets in Montmartre in the late nineteenth century.
3. Both the so-called anthropological definition of culture as humanly constructed 'webs of meaning' (Geertz 1975) and its usage in everyday life, commonly restricted to the realm of the arts, are frequently interchangeable constructs in the articles in this section.
4. That the empire of the East looms as a threat to Western imperialism is recognized, but that is a story that takes us well beyond the scope of this introduction.
5. An illustrative case regarding official institutions concerns the findings in July 2006 of the Charity Commissioners in the UK, with regard to acquisitions by the governing trustees of the Tate Galleries of works of one of the artist-trustees, apparently to finance that artist's imminent wedding. Despite the ubiquity of the practice, it is frowned upon as a kind of insider trading; members of the Stock Exchange face opprobrium for similar offenses.
6. The term is Althusser's (1971).

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